

Trial derailed as suspect fires lawyer

PARIS (AP) — The ringleader of a bombing campaign that terrorised Paris in the mid-1980s derailed his murder trial Monday by firing his defense attorney, whom he accused of not being a true Muslim. The trial of Fouad Ali Saleh and eight accomplices on charges of murder, attempted murder and conspiracy was postponed until April to give new lawyers time to study 50,000 pages of case files. Mr. Saleh, 33, a Tunisian, told the court as the trial opened amid tight security that he did not want Jacques Verges, whose clients have included Nazi war criminal Klaus Barbie, to defend him. "Mr. Verges has one foot in the Koran and another in the Torah, so I can't accept that, he has to choose," said Mr. Saleh, describing himself as a "terrorist theologian." The references to the Muslim and Jewish holy books were not immediately clear. Mr. Verges converted to Islam in the 1960s after marrying a Muslim woman, but he has no known Jewish ancestors.

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published by the Jordan Press Foundation
جوردان تايمز يومية سياسية تصدر بالانجليزية عن المؤسسة الصحفية الأردنية «الراي»

Israeli soldier kills Palestinian bus driver

OCCUPIED GAZA (R) — An Israeli soldier shot dead a Palestinian bus driver in the occupied Gaza Strip on Monday, the occupation army said. The driver, carrying Palestinian workers back from their jobs in Israel, ignored orders to stop at a checkpoint on a road to an area of Jewish settlements, the army spokeswoman claimed. A soldier at the roadblock then shot at the bus, she added. "The soldier carried out the 'arrest of suspect' procedures and as a result the local driver was killed," she said. The army announced on Sunday it was relaxing the arrest procedures to let soldiers shoot armed Palestinians on sight in the occupied territories, where four Israelis have been shot dead since late October. Some 650,000 Palestinians live in the Gaza Strip. A few thousand Israelis have settled among them.

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At least 178 dead in Turkish avalanches

GORMEC, Turkey (R) — Avalanches have killed at least 178 people in seven mountain villages in southeast Turkey. Rescue teams battling in a blizzard, tore at frozen snow with picks, shovels and bare hands on Monday, hoping to find more survivors in Gormec — believed to have taken the brunt of a series of weekend snowslides. More than 120 people, 71 of them paramilitary, whose outpost was swept away, died in Gormec. The village, population 258, was hit by two avalanches.

Egypt says Sudan oil concession in disputed area

CAIRO (R) — Egypt has objected to an oil concession awarded by Sudan to a Canadian company in a disputed border area on the remote Red Sea coast, Western diplomatic sources said on Monday. The International Petroleum Corporation (IPC) agreed in December with Khartoum to explore an area of over 35,000 square kilometers, including territory in the Halaib triangle, an area administered by Sudan but claimed by Egypt.

4 policemen slayed in Turkey

ISTANBUL, Turkey (AP) — Terrorists killed four police officers and seriously wounded another in ambushes Monday in Istanbul and the southern city of Adana, the Anatolia news agency said. Five gunmen opened fire on a car containing three officers from a special anti-terrorist squad. One officer was killed outright and the other two mortally wounded during the attack in a residential neighborhood of Istanbul. A similar attack by three gunmen in Adana left one policeman dead and another seriously wounded, Anatolia reported. It said all the gunmen escaped after the attacks.

Laser security fence proposed for Kuwait

KUWAIT (R) — Foreign companies are swamping Kuwait with high-tech proposals for a security fence it plans to build along the border with its neighbor Iraq. Projects on the table include a fence with rotating laser guns which would automatically zap any living thing that approached, industrial consultants in Kuwait said on Monday. Others involve a barrier with ground radar that could detect human infiltrators. Interior Minister Sheikh Ahmed Hamoud Al Jaber Al Sabah said in December the emirate would start building a fence along its 200 kilometer border with Iraq in March, once the badly-marked frontier was demarcated.

Libya says nuclear sites open to inspection

VIENNA (R) — Libya has told the International Atomic Energy Agency that all its nuclear facilities are open to inspection to prove it has no secret bomb-production project, the IAEA said on Monday. A statement issued after a visit to Libya by IAEA Director-General Hans Blix said Libya had expressed willingness to cooperate fully with the agency in implementing safeguards against diversion of nuclear technology to military uses.

Kuwait bans veiled women from driving

KUWAIT (R) — Kuwait's traffic department has banned veiled women from driving. "A decision has been taken which bans women who use veils to cover their faces from driving vehicles — those apprehended breaking this law will be subject to penalties," Lieutenant Colonel Ismail Al Khalidi was quoted as saying on Monday. Last November Kuwait's faculty of medicine banned Muslim fundamentalist women from wearing face veils in class, laboratories or on hospital ward rounds.

New snowstorm hitting Jordan, region; we are ready, say authorities

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Torrential rains, hail and snow are expected to continue to affect Jordan and other eastern Mediterranean countries today and part of Wednesday, the Meteorology Department announced Monday. Emergency teams were reported standing by to deal with any eventuality. Interior Minister Jawdat Al Shoul announced on television Sunday evening. Meteorology Department official Jamal Al Mousa told the Jordan Times that gale-force winds, heavy rain and snow will swamp Jordan from north to south, with snow covering most billy areas 700 metres above sea level.

He said the Kingdom was affected by a low depression now centered over southern Cyprus, accompanied by a cold air mass expected to affect the whole region. The severe weather conditions and the cold air mass were

due to a high pressure system centred over central and western Europe, Mr. Mousa said. By mid-day Wednesday, the storm will subside, only to resume Thursday afternoon, Mr. Mousa added.

Minister Shoul had said that civil defence and public security rescue teams and army helicopters, employed in the previous storms, would be ready for any emergency. The Public Works Department has also made preparations for emergency work together with teams from the Jordan Electricity Authority (JEA) and the Telecommunications Corporation (TCC).

The fresh rain and snow will probably complete the replenishment of the Kingdom's dams, according to Jordan Valley Authority (JVA) officials.

JVA Secretary General Abdul Aziz Wishah said that the overall capacity of Jordan's main five dams is 110 million cubic metres, but they had only 96 million by last weekend. The largest dam, the King Talal Dam with a capac-

ity of 80 million cubic metres was expected Monday to have 75 million while Wadi Al Arab Dam of 15 million cubic metre capacity was said to have 13.7 million.

Dr. Wishah said that the other dams, Sharhabil, Wadi Shueib and Kafra were already full along with the 11 other desert dams, which together have a capacity of 15 million cubic metres.

In a statement to the Jordan News Agency, Petra, Monday, Dr. Wishah said that there was no guarantee that the next year will bring Jordan as much rain as this year and therefore there was need for more dams to be built to collect rain water.

He acknowledged that the construction of dams raised questions about financial cost. Still, he said, the JVA is currently preparing a study on the construction of more dams and the supply of funds for their construction.

In the coming years, the JVA is planning to build Al Karamah Dam west of the town Karamah in the central Jordan Valley re-

gion, he said. The dam will be 46 metres high with an overall capacity of 55 million cubic metres. Work on the JD 45 million dam is expected to start in 1993 and end by 1996, he added.

Another planned dam is Yal Waleh, which will have a 45 metre high wall and a 9.5 million cubic metre capacity. Work on the three year project could start by 1993 and the total cost is expected to be about JD 30 million, Dr. Wishah noted.

He said the Wadi Al Mujeb projected dam of 35 million cubic metre capacity will also start by mid 1993 and could cost JD 52 million.

Earlier, the JVA announced that frost that preceded the past snowstorm caused damage to large areas of farmlands in the Jordan Valley. Banana fruits sustained up to 55 per cent damage in some areas in the northern and central regions of the Jordan Valley but no damages were reported in the southern regions. Other damages were caused to the potato, tomato and egg plant crops.

Non-Aligned Movement advocates democracy among nations, at home

NICOSIA, Cyprus (Agencies) — Foreign ministers and other delegates of the Non-Aligned Movement went into a brainstorming session Monday to reappraise the effectiveness and future role of the 101-member group in a changing world.

After a brief address at a ceremonial open session, the 183 delegates from 53 countries went into closed sessions that will last through Tuesday.

The two speakers at the open session both stressed that in addition to confronting the changed world after the end of the cold war and the demise of the Soviet Union, the NAM states should also ensure democratisation in their own ranks.

In the past the movement, formed in 1961 as an alternative political force to the superpowers, came under strong criticism for its erstwhile pro-Soviet tilt and the toleration of dictatorships and gross human rights violations within its membership.

Cyprus Foreign Minister George Iacovou delivered the inaugural address at the open session as the president of a special committee set up in 1988 to study the future of the movement.

He said that NAM should strive to "use the United Nations to turn its voice into action, so that when we speak of our effectiveness we speak of the strength of the international organisation."

He added that as the non-

aligned "demand the democratisation of international life, and as we expect cooperation to that end, so we will be asked for cooperation for the democratisation of our national lives."

Indonesian Foreign Minister Ali Al Atas, whose country will take over the presidency of the movement in September, also stressed the same theme.

"In seeking the democratisation of the United Nations we must implement democratisation among ourselves, ensuring the promotion of the principles of the human rights of individuals," he said.

Mr. Atas added that one of the issues to be discussed during the closed session should be the closer association of NAM with the Group of 77, which aims to promote economic cooperation among Third World countries.

"This should be done to ensure there is no duplication of efforts in the common goals of the two groups," Mr. Atas said.

Other speakers at the closed sessions expressed varying views in light of the new international situation, which changed from a U.S.-Soviet, or East-West, confrontation to an economic conflict between North and the South.

But speakers said the new situation should not be treated as one of confrontation, and rather one of opening up new cooperation for mutual advantage.

Conference sources said Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar

Velayati proposed the establishment of a new small committee to study the future of the movement in light of the new international situation.

But the sources added this proposal was unlikely to be adopted since the committee

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Abu Jaber: Movement has greater role in post-cold war era

AMMAN (Petra) — Foreign Minister Kamel Abu Jaber Monday stressed the importance of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) after the end of the cold war era and said the movement's role will be of greater importance in political and economic fields.

In Jordan's address to the NAM ministerial council meeting which opened Monday in Larnaca, Cyprus, Dr. Abu Jaber said the movement will have to carry out a greater moral, political and economic role, particularly at a time when the Third World problems have increased during the past 30 years.

Dr. Abu Jaber referred to indebtedness plaguing Third World countries and proposed the creation of centres to study Third World issues and problems.

"The problems of the Third World, and most of NAM's member states are Third World countries, have increased over the past 30 years and did not drop. There is the problem of indebtedness, economic difficulties, the transfer of technology and the establishment of reasonable technology," he said.

Dr. Abu Jaber met Monday with Syrian Foreign Minister Faouq Al Shara'a, Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Mousa and head of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) political department Farouq Al Qaddoumi. Dr. Abu Jaber discussed with the Arab ministers, who are heading their countries' delegations to the conference, issues related to the peace process and regional developments.

Dr. Abu Jaber said he will meet with the Syrian, Egyptian and Palestinian officials later in the day "to discuss issues of interest to us, starting with the peace conference and ending with NAM meetings."

FIS preaches 'patience' Algerian authorities crackdown on radicals

ALGIERS, Algeria (AP) — Algeria continued a nationwide crackdown on Muslim fundamentalists Monday, arresting and sentencing religious leaders, school teachers and supporters of the Islamic Salvation Front.

About 200 police cordoned off the street in central Algiers for several hours where the fundamentalist party used to have its headquarters.

Officers stopped traffic from entering and forced pedestrians onto side streets.

Algerian state radio reported the police, armed with machine guns and truncheons, had been ordered to seize the former headquarters of the Salvation Front, which moved to a different location following the June 30 arrest of party leader Abass Madani.

The moves illustrated the determination of Algeria's new military rulers to stamp out support for the Salvation Front, which was close to winning control of parliament and imposing

Muslim law in the North African state.

Mohammad Boudiaf, the nominal head of the five-man high state committee ruling Algeria, was to speak to the nation Monday night on television, Algeria's state news agency, APS, reported.

In extracts released from the taped interview, Mr. Boudiaf said the democratic process eventually would be continued, but did not announce a new date for parliamentary elections.

Elections were cancelled in January between the first and second rounds, when it was clear that the fundamentalists would win an overwhelming majority.

The government denied Monday that anyone had died in violence surrounding last Friday's prayers in the capital.

The Salvation Front earlier said that four had died in the capital and five had died else-

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Nayef Hawatmeh at a press conference Monday

Hawatmeh: Madrid formula should be 'corrected'

By Mariam M. Shahan
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — A prominent Palestinian leader Monday called for a "correction of the Madrid formula for Palestinian representation" at the Arab-Israeli bilateral peace talks, saying Palestinians should not continue participating in those negotiations unless a wider representation was accepted.

According to the "Madrid formula," delegates from the West Bank and Gaza would represent the Palestinian side in peace talks but not representatives from the diaspora or occupied Jerusalem.

"The right to include Palestinians from Jerusalem and the diaspora in the delegation to the talks is essential to a meaningful continuation of the talks," Nayef Hawatmeh, leader of the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP), told a press conference prior to ending a week-long visit to Jordan.

"Unless the principle of representing the Palestinians as a people is accepted, the talks should be suspended," he said.

"While (Palestinian) pressure for wider representation to the Moscow multilateral regional talks had borne fruit," Mr. Hawatmeh said, "the rules for Palestinian representation to the bilaterals must be changed accordingly. Otherwise, the talks should be suspended until the issue is solved."

The DFLP leader also said it was "regrettable" that the first phase of the Arab-Israeli multilateral Arab-Israeli peace talks have sharpened the rift between the Arab countries, rather than helping them improve their ties and come up with a common position.

In explaining his call for wider Palestinian representation, Mr. Hawatmeh said the Palestinians were successful in getting the co-sponsors of the talks, the U.S. and Russia, to agree to Palestinian representatives from the diaspora and Jerusalem joining the West Bank and Gaza delegates in the working groups that were set up in Moscow to conduct the multilateral negotiations.

Mr. Hawatmeh, whose party has thus far boycotted the talks, said that the "corrected" Palestinian representation would lay the groundwork for more meaningful talks. "But this correction must also be applied to the delegation to the bilaterals," he added.

"We want the negotiations to continue," Mr. Hawatmeh stressed. "What we want, however, is a unified, representative Palestinian delegation that would include delegates from the West Bank, Gaza, Jerusalem and the diaspora."

"To include representatives of some three million Palestinians in the diaspora is a must if there is to be a true representation of the Palestinians," Mr. Hawatmeh said. "In Madrid and in Moscow it was like a half-baked cake — we were represented only in part."

He cited the refusal of Dr. Haidar Abdul Shafi, the 72-year-old Gaza surgeon who headed the

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Ashrawi: Bilaterals resume Feb. 17 or 24

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (Agencies) — Palestinian peace negotiators said on Monday the next round of bilateral talks with Israel was likely to resume in Washington on Feb. 17 or 24.

"We have been informed that they (the talks) will be delayed a bit because Secretary (of State James) Baker will not be in the country on the 10th. Two dates have been suggested. We still don't know the final date... either the 17th or the 24th," said Palestinian spokeswoman Hanan Ashrawi.

An Israeli official said the dates were "not off mark."

Arab and Israeli negotiators had been considering resuming the talks on Feb. 10. A U.S. official said Mr. Baker would be abroad until the last week of February and it was up to Israelis and Arabs to set the date.

The Palestinians said their absence from multilateral Middle East talks in Moscow last week would not affect their position in bilateral peace negotiations.

"The bilaterals are the arena in which we are going to engage seriously with Israel on beginning effectively the transitional phase preparatory to ending the occupation and withdrawal," Dr. Ashrawi said at an East Jerusalem news conference.

Eleven Arab states, including Jordan, Egypt and the six members of the Gulf Cooperation Council, attended the Moscow talks, which were boycotted by Syria and Lebanon.

The Palestinians, fearing nor-

malisation of relations between Israel and Arab states before Israel agrees to withdraw from the occupied lands, demanded on Monday that any progress in multilateral talks be linked to the bilateral negotiations.

"The core of the whole conflict is Israeli occupation of Arab land and before we move to cooperation, occupation and state of war must end," said Palestinian delegate Ghassan Al Khatib.

The Palestinians told the news conference they intend to take part in further multilateral sessions on the issues of water, the environment, economics, refugee resettlement and arms control.

But they gave no clue on how the question of representation would be settled.

Dr. Ashrawi said only that "we are going to participate fully and equally and on the basis of parity and mutuality and respect for all parties involved."

Faisal Hussein, who headed the Palestinian delegation to Moscow, said he did not believe the make-up of the delegation to the multilateral talks had to be the same as that for the bilaterals.

He added: "We believe that we now have a commitment from the co-sponsors... that a new atmosphere should be created so the Palestinians can attend."

Several Palestinians said the delegation was seeking consensus among Arab countries that there would be no normalisation of relations with Israel until there was progress in the bilateral talks.

Shamir to Washington: Don't tell us what to do

TEL AVIV (R) — Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir warned the United States on Monday against trying to dictate policy on Jewish settlement in the occupied Arab land in exchange for \$10 billion in loan guarantees.

"We are very interested in receiving the guarantees but we will not accept any kind of dictat with respect to government policy," Mr. Shamir told parliament's security committee.

The 76-year-old hardliner later told reporters: "My assessment is the United States will not demand of the Israeli government things which the government cannot accept."

Mr. Shamir insisted U.S. aid for financing immigration from the former Soviet Union would not be spent in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, home to 1.75 million Palestinians in revolt against Israeli occupation.

Washington fears the guarantees, enabling Israel to borrow money abroad at preferential rates, might free other money for Jewish settlement it views as an obstacle to peace efforts.

The U.S. Congress is due to consider Israel's request for the guarantees, delayed since the beginning of last October, during the first quarter of this year. About 100,000 Jews live on the

Arab land, occupied in the 1967 Middle East war. The United States, Palestinians and the Arab states expect the land to be negotiated in peace talks launched in Madrid. Arab-Israeli talks are expected to resume, probably in Washington, later this month.

The Shamir government, which refuses to cede an inch of captured territory, spent at least \$1.1 billion on settlements in 1991, according to an Israeli monitoring group.

Mr. Shamir, careful to avoid further straining ties with Israel's guardian ally, noted the U.S. recession but said: "I have the feeling the United States intends to give us the guarantees since it has always given large-scale aid to Israel."

Israel is the largest recipient of U.S. foreign aid.

He declined to answer reporters' questions about a U.S. compromise plan to freeze building in the occupied areas after completion of 9,000 housing units already underway.

Housing Minister Ariel Sharon said last week he had started building 13,500 homes in 1991 and that several thousand others, started in 1990, were yet to be completed.

Rabin: Israel must deal with Palestinians as independent partners

CAIRO (AP) — A former Israeli prime minister said Monday that the Arab World cannot speak for the Palestinians and urged Israel to deal with them as independent partners in Middle East peace talks.

Yitzhak Rabin, also former defence minister, was quoted by the leading newspaper Al Ahran newspaper as saying that increasing settlements in the occupied Arab territories was detrimental to Israeli interests.

"The Jordanian-Palestinian delegation must be divided into two delegations," said Mr. Rabin who is the number two man in the Labour Party.

Mr. Rabin is vying with Shimon Peres, Labour's present leader, for the party's top post later this month.

"The Jordanian delegation must be independent and so must

the Palestinian delegation because we have to accept the reality that the Arab World cannot speak for the Palestinians and we have to deal with them as an independent partner," Mr. Rabin said.

The issue of independent Jordanian and Palestinian teams held up the start of direct talks with Israel in Washington for several weeks. The stalemate was finally resolved last month with the joint delegation meeting for an opening session with Israel and then splitting up into separate groups.

Mr. Rabin often has voiced his criticism of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir's policies at home. Monday's Al Ahran interview was one of the few times he has aired his views to the press in Egypt, the only Arab country linked to Israel with a peace treaty.

Abu Nidal may have been working for Mossad, book by Patrick Seale says

NEW YORK (R) — A new book claims that Sabri al-Banna, better known as Abu Nidal, the shadowy Middle Eastern terrorist who is thought to have killed and hijacked for some Arab regimes may have secretly worked for Israel as well.

"Abu Nidal: A gun for hire," by British Journalist Patrick Seale, points to numerous circumstantial links between Abu Nidal and the Mossad, the Israeli secret service.

The book claims that despite Abu Nidal's documented attacks on Israeli targets, including a grenade attack on an El Al Airlines counter and the killings of several European Jews, he may have been covertly working for the Mossad against the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO).

"In theory, Israel and Abu Nidal are bitter enemies; in practice, their anti-PLO objectives and operations are so similar as to suggest an operational relationship," Mr. Seale writes.

Mr. Seale says that both Arabs and Israelis have benefited politically from Abu Nidal's terrorist acts, including the murder of

several PLO moderates, a grenade attack on a cafe in Rome injuring 40 people, and the murder of Michael Nimri, a journalist who supported the PLO's Yasser Arafat.

Abu Nidal gunmen also claimed responsibility for the hijacking of an Egyptian airliner flying from Athens to Cairo in which six passengers were killed and 60 died in the ensuing fire.

The book, which Random House issued on Monday, offers several circumstantial reasons for the link:

While nearly every Palestinian leader and organisation since 1987 has participated in the intifada, the West Bank uprising against Israel, Abu Nidal has been conspicuously absent.

Abu Nidal has systematically murdered several leading PLO moderates, whom the Israelis most fear.

Despite numerous anti-Israeli attacks, Israel has never retaliated against Abu Nidal, his bases or his organisation.

Mr. Seale's sources connect two high-ranking members of Abu Nidal's organisation, Ghas-

san al-Ali and Mustafa Awad, to the Mossad.

Mr. Seale says that Abu Nidal may have worked for the Israelis to eliminate the PLO so he could dominate the Middle Eastern terrorist scene.

"Abu Nidal was less a product of intra-Palestinian disputes than of Israel's long-running war against the Palestinians," the book maintains. "Whatever jobs he might have done for Arab sponsors, and they had been numerous and nasty, he had done many other jobs from which Israel alone appeared to benefit."

Mr. Seale, author of several books on the Middle East and a 30-year veteran of reporting from that region for the London Observer, describes Abu Nidal as a terrorist who worked for any Arab leader who paid him.

He says that Iraq, Syria and Libya have protected Abu Nidal while he carried out a world-wide arms dealing and shakedown operation that netted him more than \$400 million and control over more than 2,000 terrorists.

Abu Nidal ran an international protection racket, blackmailing



Abu Nidal in 1976

countries into paying millions of dollars for the security of their diplomats, embassies and allies.

His motives appeared to be either self-serving or mercenary, and to be reckless as to guarantee a hostile backlash," Mr. Seale said. "Abu Nidal had come a long way from his early commitment to the Palestinian cause. He had become a gun for hire, a nihilist."

Weizman quits Israeli politics

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (R) — Political maverick Ezer Weizman, who helped make Israel's peace with Egypt and became an outspoken advocate of talks with the PLO, said on Monday he was retiring.

"I've come to the conclusion that I've reached a point in my political life where I've contributed what I can," the 67-year-old former fighter pilot and defence minister told Reuters.

Israeli newspapers said Weizman, who left the rightwing Likud in mid-career and is now a member of parliament for the more dovish Labour Party, would tell the Knesset on Monday that he would not stand in Israel's June 23 national election.

Israel's biggest daily, Yedioth Ahronoth, quoting Weizman's friends, said he had not ruled out the possibility of becoming Israel's next president, a largely ceremonial post. His uncle Chaim Weizmann was the first head of state.

Born in Tel Aviv to one of the most illustrious Jewish families in Palestine, Ezer Weizman joined the British air force in 1942 and helped found the air wing of The Haganah, the underground army which fought for a Jewish state.

He commanded Israel's air force from 1958 to 1966 but was regarded as a political lightweight until he engineered Likud's 1977 election victory, which ended 29 years of Labour rule.

He became defence minister under Menachem Begin and developed a warm friendship with Egyptian President Anwar Sadat during negotiation of the historic 1979 Israeli-Egyptian peace treaty.

He resigned from Likud in May 1980 in frustration with Begin's reluctance to build on the accord. After four years in the political wilderness he came back in 1984 at the head of the small Yahad (together) Party. In 1986 his party merged with Labour.

Weizman was science minister in a left-right unity government in 1989 when he fell out with Likud Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir for his alleged contacts with the Palestine Liberation Organisation.

Israeli media said Weizman had met Nabil Ramlawi, head of the PLO Geneva office. PLO contacts are illegal for Israelis.

Freak sandstorm envelops Egypt

CAIRO, Egypt (AP) — A freak sandstorm struck buffeted Egypt Monday, enveloping the country in a dim yellow cocoon, paralysing the Suez Canal and closing Alexandria harbour and all desert highways leading to Cairo.

A statement by the government's meteorological department said that the worst affected were Mediterranean coastal cities, where wind speed reached 90 kilometres an hour and visibility dropped to 20 metres.

Cairo's normally overcrowded streets were emptier than usual. Wind velocity in the capital was 60 kilometres an hour and visibility was down to 30 metres.

Garbage, waste paper and even branches torn off trees by the gale flew through Cairo streets. Some poor people were seen trying to grab the branches for use as firewood.

Cairo international airport remained open to traffic with departures unaffected, but 10 in-

coming planes were diverted to the southern cities of Luxor and Aswan. In Aswan, the speed of the winds was about 35 kilometres an hour but visibility was 1.5 kilometres, the meteorological department said.

Ship convoys in the Suez Canal, which links the Mediterranean and the Red Sea, were halted, a canal authority spokesman at Suez said.

In the Mediterranean port of Alexandria, the harbour was closed after the wind velocity reached 45 kilometres an hour and waves were more than three metres high.

Also along the Mediterranean, three police sentry boxes at Saloum, on the Egyptian-Libyan border 680 kilometres northwest of Cairo, were blown away by the gales but no human casualties were reported.

Five desert highways linking Cairo to the rest of the country were closed starting around 10 a.m. (0800 GMT) Monday when

the storm began. Along the Cairo-Fayoum highway, a large fire at a power station in the 6th of October industrial centre raged out of control as the flames were spread by the strong winds.

The meteorological department statement read to the AP on the telephone said that the storm was caused by a deep atmospheric depression which crossed into the western desert. This sent high-speed, sand-laden winds blanketing the country.

The storm is expected to last until Tuesday, when it will be followed by rain and low temperatures.

Egypt is usually struck by annual sandstorms called Khamsin seen every spring. Monday's storm was unseasonal, but a meteorological expert recalled that the country had been hit by a less severe storm at the same time in 1990.

Libya is scapegoat in Pan Am blast — Qadhafi

WASHINGTON (R) — Libyan leader Muammar Qadhafi believes a compromise can be reached to head off sanctions against his country over the 1988 destruction of a Pan Am airliner over Lockerbie, according to an interview published on Monday.

Col. Qadhafi also said in the Washington Post interview that he wanted the United States to reopen its embassy in Tripoli because indirect contacts had been fruitless.

The United States and Britain have demanded that Tripoli surrender Libyans said to have played a role in the mid-air bombing of the Pan Am plane over Lockerbie in southern Scotland.

France wants Libyan cooperation in investigating a similar bombing in 1989. The two blasts killed 441 people.

Asserting that Libya was a scapegoat in the affair, Col.

Qadhafi told the Washington Post: "I don't think the problem is difficult. We must reach a compromise."

Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak said in remarks published on Saturday that Egyptian intervention saved Libya from a Western military strike over charges of Libyan backing for international terrorism.

"Egypt has tried and is still trying to contain the Libyan crisis. Egyptian intervention has indeed saved Libya from a military strike that had already been decided," Cairo's Al Gomhouriya newspaper quoted him as saying.

Col. Qadhafi said he had no particular proposal to make over a compromise.

"What I say is... anything they accuse us of, we will investigate. Eventually, it will be discovered that Libya is an innocent victim," he said.

"Our reputation has been tainted because of what has been said about us. We would like to clear our reputation."

"Libya will not have mercy on terrorists on the one hand, but on the other hand we are sure of the innocence of these accused people."

He said he did not know who was behind the bombings.

Col. Qadhafi said Libya was a victim of terrorism because it had to live in fear of attack from U.S. forces, which bombed his home in 1986 killing an infant daughter.

The Libyan leader said: "hostile quarters" were trying to sabotage attempts to improve Libyan ties with the United States.

He said these included the Jewish lobby, fundamentalist Muslims who had fled Libya and Europeans who feared better Libya-U.S. ties would hurt them economically.

Turkey sets up Black Sea pact with cold war foes

ISTANBUL (R) — Foreign ministers from nine countries met in Istanbul on Monday to initial a plan for a Black Sea Economic Cooperation Pact inspired by Turkey's drive to help former Communist states towards the free market.

President Turgut Ozal, who first proposed the regional group in 1989, was due to open the meeting of foreign ministers and their deputies from Bulgaria, Romania, the Russian Federation, Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia.

Turkey says the project is designed to help its old cold war foes in their transition to democracy and free market economies.

The idea, conceived before the Soviet Union fell apart, has been promptly taken up by its newly independent republics keen to boost trade and do business with their neighbours.

"The next foresees cooperation based mainly on the dynamics of the private sector," a foreign ministry statement said.

"A better commercial, financial and legal environment will be created to improve and boost the economy of the region and will help the integration of this region into the European and world economy," it added.

Transport minister Yasar Topcu told Anatolian news agency that Turkey planned to develop its Black Sea port of Hopa, near the Georgian border, as a focal point for regional trade.

He said a series of new investments and services were planned for the Black Sea region, including a new airport between the Turkish coastal towns of Samsun and Carsamba.

"We are planning to use ferry boats to carry railcars between Constanta (in Romania) and Samsun," he added.

Georgian Deputy Foreign Minister Tede Capatidze said on arrival here on Sunday that the group could even build what he called "a security based on mutual confidence."

Camburjet newspaper said ministers were expected to discuss the idea of a Black Sea investment and industrial development bank, already proposed at preparatory talks in Moscow in July.

Officials from Turkey's state-owned Eximbank said Ankara would have to provide credits to its partners to make the pact work.

Post-war Iraq grapples with crime wave

By Bernd Debusmann
Reuters

BASRA, Iraq — By the time the bus pulled into Basra, its passengers, stripped to their underpants, were chilled to the bone and seething with anger.

The terminal, packed with pre-dawn travellers, shook with hoots of raucous laughter. Police were not so amused.

The passengers, robbed of everything they carried and almost everything they wore, were victims of the crime wave that has struck post-war Iraq.

As Basra residents told the story, the bus was flagged down by a man waving a red lantern on the six-lane super-highway from Baghdad.

Men with automatic weapons surrounded it and ordered the eight women on the bus to stand aside and look away.

They made the men, one by one, hand over their money, valuables and every piece of clothing, down to shoes and socks, except for the underpants. The highwaymen vanished into the night, the bus resumed its journey.

"Highway robbery is part of the crime problem we are facing," said a senior official in Baghdad. "Where there is economic misery, there is an increase in crime."

U.N.-imposed trade sanctions on Iraq and the after-effects of the Gulf war have driven the average Iraqi citizen's income to a level comparable to rural India or sub-Saharan Africa, according to a recent study by researchers from the London School of Economics.

They found that "in terms of purchasing power, over food, private incomes have dropped ... to somewhere between five and seven per cent" of levels before Iraq's August 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

Iraqi authorities have countered a sharp increase in crime by stiffening penalties, since mid-January, robbery and theft, including car theft, are punishable by death. Justice Minister Shaban Al-Malki said the measure had been taken "in response to demands by Iraqi public opinion" because

rampant crime had shaken the people's confidence in the authorities' ability to ensure security in the country.

A gang of car thieves captured a few days after the Revolutionary Command and Council ruling now face execution.

According to the weekly news magazine Alef Ba, the crime rate has dropped since the introduction of draconian punishment. It gave no figures and some Iraqis doubt that the threat of death has had much effect.

The highway where the bus was held up is a case in point. Travellers say it has become so dangerous that few now dare travel at night — despite army checkpoints at every junction between Basra and the city of Nasiriyah.

Some of the checkpoints resemble small military camps, complete with tanks, armoured personnel carriers and sand-bagged machinegun positions. Officials blame much of the rampant crime in southern Iraq on the legacy of an abortive uprising by Shiite Muslim

against the rule of Saddam Hussein. His forces crushed the revolt in a campaign of ruthless efficiency, using tanks, helicopter gunships and artillery against the rebels.

Hundreds of survivors, along with army deserters, residents say, fled to the trackless southern marshes that sprawl between the rivers Tigris and Euphrates and in places extend to the border with Iran.

It is an area of reed-covered islets where bandits and ex-rebels live in hiding, making occasional forays for food and money. There are persistent rumours of isolated skirmishes between fugitive rebels and troops.

Surprisingly in a country brimming with weapons that were abandoned or sold after the war, murder seems to rank low on the list of post-war crime.

The official press rarely reports murders and even the Iraqi rumour mill, an incessant provider of often outlandish information, has little to say about criminal murders.

But critics say the situation is likely to become worse with marauding gangs of impoverished former. Mengistu soldiers turned bandits simply masquerading behind a political facade.

"It's a joke. There's no way that anything remotely resembling a democratic election could be held in these areas anyway," said an Ethiopian employee of one major Western aid organisation.

MIDDLE EAST NEWS IN BRIEF

Somalia interim president expels rival warlord

MOGADISHU (R) — Somalia's self-proclaimed interim president Ali Mahdi Mohammad has expelled rival warlord Mohammad Farah Aided from the chairmanship of the United Somali Congress (USC) party, officials said. Ali Mahdi accused Aided of starting three months of street fighting in the capital in which an estimated 20,000 people have been killed or wounded since November. After a meeting in Ali Mahdi's northern stronghold of the divided capital, officials said late on Sunday Gen. Aided had been expelled because of his role in causing unnecessary deaths, injuries and hardships to civilians. The expulsion was likely to have little effect. Gen. Aided and Ali Mahdi have not met since November. Gen. Aided was installed as USC chairman after peace talks in Djibouti last July aimed at ending factional rivalries. He broke away four months later to stake his claim on state leadership. Ali Mahdi and Gen. Aided came from different sub-clans of the Hawiye who united to fight and depose dictator Mohammad Siad Barre in January last year.

Kuwait contributes to Islamic reconstruction fund

KUWAIT (R) — Kuwait's Islamic Affairs Ministry has contributed \$20 million to a \$500-million fund to help finance the country's rebuilding programme, newspapers said on Monday. Ministry officials signed the agreement on Monday with Saudi Arabia's Al Baraka group, one of the main banks involved in setting up the Islamic fund, the papers said. Saudi bankers said last October it would start extending finance to Kuwait in the next two to three years. Credit will only be extended to Kuwaiti companies. Western and other Arab banks are also invited to join the fund, although it would be run along Islamic principles, which ban interest. Islamic banks operate on a system of profit and loss sharing. Al Baraka Investment and Development Company has put up an initial \$30 million and the Jeddah-

based Islamic Development Bank another 60 million.

Arab League maintains sports boycott on Iraq

RABAT, Morocco (AP) — The Arab League decided Sunday to maintain a ban on allowing Iraq to participate in international sporting events held by the 22-member organisation. Ministers of youth and sport meeting in the Moroccan capital rejected Iraq's demand to be readmitted to the league's athletic events, from which it was banned during the Gulf crisis. Participants did not disclose a vote, but said that the Gulf states were unmoved by Iraqi accusations that sanctions against its athletes were unjust. Iraq has been largely isolated within the league since President Saddam Hussein's troops invaded another member state, Kuwait, in 1990.

Czechoslovak tanks for Syria shipped through Polish port

WARSAW, Poland (AP) — A Danish freighter has taken a shipment of Czechoslovak-made tanks and ammunition earmarked for Syria from the Polish port of Szczecin, the PAP news agency reported Sunday. The shipment, including 12 T-72 tanks made under Soviet license and several dozen tonnes of ammunition and spare parts, was taken aboard the Danish vessel "Nadia J" which left Szczecin Saturday night. It was the second shipment of Czechoslovak-made arms for Syria expedited through Szczecin this year under an arms deal which provides for the delivery of about 150 tanks and unspecified amount of ammunition to Damascus. The first shipment left in mid-January aboard a German freighter, but it never reached Syria. The vessel was stopped in the Mediterranean by a German warship and was being escorted to the German port of Kiel, PAP said. Despite pressure from the United States to stop arms sales to Syria, considered a supporter of international terrorism, Czechoslovakia has continued shipments of arms to Damascus, arguing that the exports are an important source of hard currency.

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel: 773111-19

PROGRAMME TWO

18:00 Bouli
18:05 Les Tortues Ninja
18:10 Mars et Sophie
18:15 News in French
19:15 Varieties
19:30 News in Hebrew
20:00 News in Arabic
20:30 Evening Shade
21:10 Colour in the Green
22:00 News in English
22:30 G.B.H.

PRAYER TIMES

05:06 Fajr
06:26 (Sunrise) Duhr
11:49 Duhr
12:12 'Asr
17:12 Maghreb
18:32 'Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church Swedish, Tel. 810740
Assumption of God Church, Tel.

632785.
St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590.
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 637440.
De la Salle Church Tel. 661757
Terrence Church Tel. 622666
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 623541.
Anglican Church Tel. 625383, Tel. 626543.
Armenian Church Tel. 625326.
Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331.
Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 775261.
St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751.
Assuan International Church Tel. 653226.
Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 812295.
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints Tel. 623624, 654932.
Church of the Nazareth Tel. 675691.

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology.
It will be cold, cloudy and rainy and snow is expected to fall on areas of an elevation of 800 metres and above.

Winds will be southwesterly fresh, with strong blows at times. In Aqaba, it will be dusty and cloudy and scattered showers of rain are expected. Winds will be southerly fresh and seas calm. Min/Max. temp.

Amman 1/14
Aqaba 2/7
Desert 6/13
Jordan Valley 6/13

Yesterday's high temperatures: Amman 6, Aqaba 15. Humidity readings: Amman 96 per cent, Aqaba 50 per cent.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

AMMAN:
Dr. Saad Ali 788285
Dr. Mohammad Ali Zaid 675480
Dr. Kayed Halayqa 783222
Dr. Yabba Abdul Rahim 736072
First pharmacy 661912
Fardous pharmacy 778336
Al Aqsa pharmacy 672085
Nasrallah pharmacy 623672
Al Saban pharmacy 636730

Yacoub pharmacy 644945
Shamirah pharmacy 637660

REDD:
Dr. Amin Abu Elda (-)
Al Shara's pharmacy (273825)

ZARQA:
Dr. Akram Haddad (-)
Khalid pharmacy 985417

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre 637111
Civil Defence Department 661111
Civil Defence Emergency 199
Rescue Police 192, 621111, 637777
Fire Brigade 991228
Blood Bank 775121
Highway Police 843402
Traffic Police 896390
Public Security Department 630231
Host Complaints 625803
Price Complaints 661176
Water and Sewerage 897467
Complaints 787111
Amman Municipality 787111
Telephone Information (directory assistance) 121

Overseas Calls 012303
Central Amman Telephone 623101
Repairs 661101
Abdullah Telephone Repairs 661101
Jordan Television 773111
Radio Jordan 774111
Water Authority 680100
Jordan Electricity Authority 815615
Electric Power Company 636361
RU Flight Information 08-33203
Queen Alia Int. Airport 08-53200

AMMAN:
Hussein Medical Centre 813813/32
Khadija Maternity, J. Amn. 644261/6
Alkhil Maternity, J. Amn. 643412
Jabal Amman Maternity 642362
Malhas, J. Amman 636140
Palestine, Shamsat 664171/4
Shamsat Hospital 669131
University Hospital 849845
Al-Member Hospital 667227/9
The Islamic, Abdali 666127/37
Al-Ahli, Abdali 664164/6
Jalil, Al-Mahjara 777101/3
Al-Badri, J. Adrafel 775112/6
Aray, Marja 891611/5
Queen Alia Hospital 602402/0
Amal Hospital 674155

HOSPITALS

ZARQA:
Zarqa Govt. Hospital (09)963323
Zarqa National Hospital (09)900560
El Sim Hospital (09)86732
Al Hilam Modern Hospital (09)99999
DEIR:
Private Deir Hospital (02)25555
Greek Catholic Hospital (02)22225
Al Nides Hospital (02)247100
AGARA:
Private Hays Hospital (03)914111

FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT
This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) Information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (06)3200-5, where it should always be verified.

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights (Terminal 1)
05:00 Singapore, Kuala Lumpur (RJ)
05:30 Aqaba (RJ)
05:55 Muscat, Dubai (RJ)
06:50 Doha, Bahrain (RJ)

17:05 New York, Montreal (RJ)
17:55 Frankfurt, Belgrade (RJ)
19:30 Tripoli (RJ)

Other Flights (Terminal 2)

19:35 Beirut (ME)
11:45 Bucharest (MS)

DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights (Terminal 1)

07:00 Aqaba (RJ)
18:30 London (RJ)
18:40 Tripoli (RJ)
11:00 Vienna, Frankfurt (RJ)
11:10 Belgrade, Madrid (RJ)
11:30 Amsterdam, New York (RJ)
11:45 Rome, Madrid (RJ)
11:50 Geneva, Paris (RJ)
20:00 Jeddah (RJ)
20:15 Dhahran (RJ)
20:30 Abu Dhabi, Dubai (RJ)
21:15 Laraca (RJ)
21:15 Damascus (RJ)

Other Flights (Terminal 2)

18:30 Paris (AF)

06:15 Bucharest (RO)

MARKET PRICES

Upper/lower price in file per kg.
Apple (red) 700/700
Apple (yellow) 500/500
Banana 500/450
Banana (Makassar) 550/500
Beans 700/600
Cabbage 180/120
Carrot 200/150
Cauliflower 220/160
Cucumbers (large) 300/250
Cucumbers (small) 540/500
Eggplant 550/500
Garlic 650/550
Onion (dry) 200/150
Onion (green) 220/170
Pepper (hot) 420/250
Pepper (sweet) 1000/800
Potato

Urban Development Department awards contracts for two projects worth JD 2 million

AMMAN (Petra) — The Urban Development Department (UDD) Monday awarded two local firms housing and civil works projects worth JD 2.026 million.

The UDD also concluded an agreement with the Civil Defence Department (CDD) to supply equipment for its centres at Russeifa and Manara.

Following the signing of the two agreements with the local firms, UDD Director General Youssef Hiyasat said the housing project to be carried out at Beit Ras in the Irbid Governorate will benefit low-income groups. The project entails building separate housing units on 767 plots of land plus schools and community centre facilities on land estimated at 304,000 square metres, Mr. Hiyasat noted.

He said that the tender also covers the construction of roads, water networks 15,555 metres in length, a 11,030-metre long



Youssef Hiyasat

sewerage network and other civil works including telephone and electricity networks as well as retaining walls and public gardens.

The total cost of the project, which is slated to be completed by the end of 1993, is JD 1.184 million, Mr. Hiyasat noted.

The second project entails the construction of schools and social centres at Marqab, east of Amman, at the total cost of JD 842,000. Mr. Hiyasat said the project, to be carried out on a 4,930 square metre area, entails building retaining walls, public gardens car parks and other facilities plus two schools, one for girls and the other for boys in addition to a two-storey community centre. He said that the civil works will be part of a housing estate project to be announced at the Marqab site in the coming month.

The UDD agreement with the CDD provides for the former to purchase and install equipment used in first aid and emergency operations at the CDD centres in Manara and Russeifa. Civil Defence Centres are among other facilities and civil works provided for each housing estate constructed by the UDD in various regions.



University of Jordan President Fawzi Gharaibeh Monday receives a visiting delegation from Harvard University

Visiting team discusses protecting Jordan's architectural heritage

AMMAN (Petra) — University of Jordan President Fawzi Gharaibeh received Monday a delegation representing the Agha Khan Foundation for Islamic Studies Centre at Harvard University and the Technological Institute of Massachusetts.

Discussion at the meeting centred on enhancing cooperation between the university and the foundation in the field of Islamic architectural engineering.

The meeting also reviewed the activities of the Agha Khan unit at the University of Jordan. The unit, which is considered a regional research centre, aims at developing the educational process of architecture in the Islamic World and to encourage advanced studies on Islamic architecture.

Dr. Gharaibeh discussed also with the delegation the unit's need for support in terms of visiting professors, reference books, periodicals, slides and computer programmes.

Dr. Gharaibeh voiced hope that this unit will be able to carry out its role at the local and regional levels in preserving Jordan's architectural heritage and studying its features, taking into consideration the environmental features of the design and the local construction material.

The visiting delegation lauded the high level attained by the Architecture Department at the university. The delegation also met with Dean of the Engineering and Technology Faculty Issam Zaablawi, Chairman of the Architecture Department Kamel Mahadin, the department's teaching staff and students pursuing their higher studies at the department.

The meeting discussed ways of supporting the Agha Khan Centre at the university and plans to hold seminars on conserving archaeological sites and preserving the architectural history of Jordan.

Conference to bolster Christian-Islamic ties on issue of Jerusalem, official says

AMMAN (J.T.) — Secretary General of the Near East Council of Churches (NECC) Gabriel Habib ended a three-day visit to Jordan Monday by announcing that the ground has been paved for a joint Christian-Islamic endeavour to bolster the Christian-Muslim presence in the city of Jerusalem.

During the visit, Mr. Habib had meetings with Information Minister Mahmoud Al Sharif, the head of the Royal Commission on Jerusalem Affairs and other officials to discuss current Israeli plans to Judaize the holy city and Zionist practices in Arab lands.

At a meeting with the head of the Royal Commission on Jerusalem Affairs, Mr. Habib said the two sides issued a call for a joint Islamic-Christian meeting to be held as soon as possible to discuss the danger looming over Jerusalem in view of Israel's current settlement projects.

The conference on Jerusalem should be unique as it would underline the special status of Jerusalem for the three monotheistic religions and its

symbol of peace for the whole world, said Mr. Habib in a statement before his departure for Cyprus.

He said that the conference would draw up a general framework for a joint Christian-Islamic move in the Western nations to win support for the Christian-Islamic position over Jerusalem and the rights of the Palestinian people.

Furthermore, the conference would offer a chance for deepening further Islamic-Christian cooperation at all fronts, he added.

The Near East Council of Churches groups the Greek Orthodox and Catholic Churches, the Roman Catholic and Protestant denominations in the Middle East region. The NECC strives to deepen Islamic-Christian cooperation and provides relief and humanitarian services in times of war and natural disasters. The council, according to Mr. Habib, has been dedicating much of its efforts lately towards supporting the just cause of the Palestinian people.

Sharif Zeid to reply to deputy's questions

AMMAN (Petra) — The Lower House of Parliament will meet Wednesday under the chairmanship of House Speaker Abdul Latif Arabiyat and in the presence of Cabinet members.

The meeting will include a reply statement by Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker to inquiries by deputy Ahmad Oweidi Ali Abadi on "Technical Assistance to the Private Sector" Draft Law.

The meeting will also include replies by Health Minister Aref Al Bataineh to queries by Deputy Mansour Seifeddin Murad on the formation of an ad hoc committee

whose task will be implementing the interpretation of the Law Bureau's decision on the equivalence of certificates from abroad. The House will also discuss a decision by its Legal Committee on the 1990 copyrights Draft Law.

The Lower House's Financial Committee met Sunday during which it reviewed Ministry of Finance related issues, including the ministry's uncollected dues, financial liabilities due to the ministry, embezzlement of public funds and inquiries made by the Audit Bureau to the ministry.

WHAT'S GOING ON

EXHIBITIONS

- ★ Exhibition of paintings by Iraqi artist Mahmoud Al Obeidi at Alia Art Gallery.
- ★ Exhibition by Iraqi artist Salma Al Allaq at the Royal Cultural Centre.
- ★ Exhibition of drawings by the French school's kindergarten children at the French Cultural Centre.

THEATRE

- ★ Arabic play entitled "Galgamash" at the Royal Cultural Centre — 8 p.m.

FILM

- ★ English-subtitled German film entitled "Lebenszeichen" (Signs of Life) at the Goethe Institute — 8 p.m.

Arab states to launch fundraising drive to help UNRWA, official says

By Omar Al Omari
Petra

AMMAN — Arab states hosting Palestinian refugees are launching a campaign to help raise funds for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) to finance operations benefiting the refugees in the Middle East region.

The announcement was made by the head of Jordan's delegation to a week-long meeting held last month in Cairo to discuss Palestinian refugee affairs in the Arab World.

The meeting, held between Jan. 26 and Jan. 31, recommended the creation of a committee representing Jordan, Egypt, Syria and the Arab League's Palestinian Affairs Department to tour Arab countries and urge them to offer more donations to UNRWA so that it can honour its commitments in its fields of operations, said Adel Irshaid in a statement upon his return from Cairo.

Mr. Irshaid, who is director of the Foreign Ministry's Palestinian Affairs Department, said that the conference also appealed to Arab countries to offer assistance to Palestinian students who failed to pay their university fees in view of the deteriorating economic conditions inside the occupied Arab territories. He said that the Cairo meeting suggested that an Arab League committee follow up the matter and raise contributions from oil-rich Arab states to pay the fees, estimated at \$3,645,848.

The conference passed other recommendations related to Israel's ongoing expansionist

plans in the Holy City of Jerusalem, socio-economic conditions of Arabs under Israeli rule, Israel's drive to evict Arabs from their homes, Israel's settlement programme, its stealing of Arab water and the Judaisation of Jerusalem, Mr. Irshaid added.

Furthermore, the conference attended by Jordan, Egypt, Syria, Lebanon and Palestine representatives, recommended that Arab states support UNRWA's emergency fund designed to find employment for Palestinian refugees and provide assistance to needy Palestinian families in the occupied lands, Mr. Irshaid said.

He said an appeal went to Arab states to honour their commitment to supporting the steadfastness of the Palestinian people and back their intifada against Israel's occupation as agreed on at Arab summit meetings.

The conference also recommended that Arab countries follow-up developments in Israel's plans to evict Palestinians and settle Jewish immigrants and that the Arab League distribute reports about these developments to various Arab countries and its missions abroad, according to Mr. Irshaid.

He said that the conference also recommended that Arab states maintain strong ties with former Soviet Union republics and the countries of eastern Europe, urging them to help ensure the implementation of U.N. Security Council resolutions concerning Palestine.

According to Mr. Irshaid, the Cairo conference discussed the question of moving UN-

RWA's headquarters to its field of operations in the Middle East to be re-stationed in Beirut, where it was formerly located before the Lebanese civil war.

The conference reaffirmed a previous call on the United Nations to take a decision in this respect now that life has returned to normal to Beirut and all of Lebanon, Mr. Irshaid noted. He said that Lebanon will play host to the next meeting of Arab countries hosting refugees in July.

Mr. Irshaid said that he submitted to the conference a full report about the deteriorating economic and social conditions of Palestinians in the occupied Arab lands and the worldwide contacts through diplomatic channels in Amman in defence of Palestinian rights. The report covered such matters as the flow of Palestinian agricultural products across the River Jordan bridges to Jordan and other Arab states and about Israel's inhuman practices in Arab lands, Mr. Irshaid said.

Among other topics discussed at the meeting, he said, were reports by the Arab League Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (ALESCO) education for the Palestinians and arrangements for protecting and restoring cultural and heritage in Jerusalem and other parts of occupied territories.

An Arab League report submitted to the meeting, he said, covered the uprising of the Palestinian people, Jewish settlement programmes and the Madrid and Washington Middle East peace negotiations.

Minister outlines Jordanian efforts to protect environment at conference

NAIROBI (J.T.) — Jordan has submitted to a United Nations meeting about environment being held in Nairobi a general outline of its national strategy on combating pollution and greening the country, noting the major projects being carried out to improve environmental conditions in the Kingdom.

The Jordanian endeavours were presented to the meeting of the board of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) by Minister of Municipal and Rural Affairs and the Environment Abdul Razzak Tubeishat, who spoke about the natural green belt being established in the semi-desert region to stem desertification.

In his presentation, Dr. Tubeishat spoke in-depth about Jordan's close cooperation with U.N. experts on the environment, which he said paved the ground for selecting Jordan as one of four regions of the world for the implementation of a U.N.-sponsored environmental



Abdul Razzak Tubeishat

project.

He said that under the terms of the agreement for the programme, large semi-desert areas of land will undergo extensive reclamation work to be developed into pasture lands and enrich the

country's livestock wealth.

Jordan's deep concern over environmental issues at the local, regional and international levels, the minister said, was displayed through its signing of a total of 15 international agreements, including the Montreal Protocol on the Protection of the Ozone and the Basel Agreement on the Cross Border Transit of Dangerous and Poisonous Waste.

The minister also presented to the UNEP board meeting a general outline of the Jordanian national environment strategy, which was worked out in cooperation with the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), and called for greater concerted efforts at the international level to ensure a safer earth for humans.

The UNEP meeting, which opened Sunday, will discuss an agenda for the international conference on the environment due to be held in Brazil in June. Jordan is member of the UNEP board, which groups 50 nations.

New surgical tool to make brain surgery safer, bloodless, official says

By Maha Addasi
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The Gamma "knife", a unique Swedish-made "surgical" tool worth \$3 million and used to treat deep-seated and often inaccessible brain tumours without the use of a knife, will be introduced at the King Hussein Medical Centre (HMC) if funds are available, Dr. Youssef Qusous, the director general of the Royal Medical Services for the Armed Forces has said.

Once used at the HMC, the hospital will be one of 27 such places using the knife around the world and will be the only Gamma knife project in the entire Middle East region. On a larger scale, the project will be the only one in the Asian and African continents, making it the regional Gamma knife centre for treating patients in these continents, according to Thomas Pussepp, a physician and the vice president of Elekta, the Swedish company that makes the Gamma knife.

In an opening speech at the Gamma knife seminar that took place at the Farah Cardiac Centre of the HMC Tuesday, Dr. Qusous said that Sweden chose Jordan for the Gamma knife project because Jordan is known for its high standards of medical development and training.

"Jordan is known for its good medical reputation in the region. The cardiac centre is already one of the best in the region to which patients from different countries come for treatment," Dr. Qusous said. "With help in funding, Jordan will become the centre for the Gamma knife project too."

Dr. Titi Rahn, a neurosurgeon,

and the person who lectured on the Gamma knife, said that Jordan was also chosen for the Gamma knife project because of its easy accessibility to people in the region. "Visas are more readily available to people coming to Jordan, making it one of the prime countries to install a Gamma knife. It is also important to mention that the chief of the discipline and the head of neurosurgery at the HMC, Dr. Adel Shrideh, has been trained in the use of the Gamma knife when he visited us in Karolinska Hospital in Stockholm, Sweden, for a few months," Dr. Raah said.

According to an informed source who preferred not to be named, Dr. Adel Shrideh's abilities and training in the use of the Gamma knife will mean that Jordan can already save on the costs of training as he will be able to train other neurosurgeons in the use of the Gamma knife.

Dr. Qusous said that the Gamma knife is very cost efficient because using it to treat tumours would eliminate need for a hospital stay by patients.

"The breakthrough idea of the Gamma knife is its ability to treat brain tumours non-invasively so that a patient can resume life immediately after treatment," Dr. Qusous said.

In a single treatment session, the Gamma knife focuses 201 beams of ionizing radiation on the target with a mechanical accuracy of 0.1 mm. The precise focusing of the beams serves to eradicate the target while sparing surrounding brain tissue from any significant dose of radiation, according to a statement issued at the seminar.

Dr. Raah said the Gamma knife procedure is a bloodless procedure. As a non-invasive technique the Gamma knife involves no traditional surgical incisions with no lengthy recuperation required. The Gamma knife procedure is devoid of post-operative complications such as bleeding and infection. Most importantly patients do not experience discomfort after treatment," Dr. Raah said.

Mr. Pussepp spoke of the many advantages of the Gamma knife and mentioned the its unparalleled clinical results with the advantage over microsurgery of ensuring that facial nerves remain intact after treatment.

Mr. Pussepp also mentioned that the economic benefits of a tool include cost effectiveness that lies between 30 per cent and 70 per cent as compared with conventional surgery. He added that for certain tumours, patients should have the Gamma knife option in treatment to ensure that the patient would have complete ability to hear, which in conventional surgery is not always possible.

Sources at the HMC said that the Neurology Centre there is completely ready for installing the Gamma knife as they have the trained staff for its use. But the source voiced concern over the funds for the Gamma knife and said that once purchased it would take four months for the device to be used for treatments at the HMC.

The seminar was opened under the patronage of His Highness Prince Raad.

Jordanian industrial fair to be held in Khartoum in April

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Jordan Commercial Centres Corporation (JCCC) is organising a Jordanian industrial fair in Khartoum in April with goods to be sold directly to the Sudanese public, according to an announcement here Monday.

In its announcement, the JCCC said that the exhibition, the first of its type to be held in the Sudanese capital, was designed to orient the public of that Arab country on Jordan's national products.

The organisation of the fair is in implementation of minutes of deliberations concluded by

Jordan and Sudan during last month's visit to Jordan by a Sudanese delegation led by Minister of State Othman Mahjoub, the statement said.

The Sudanese minister and his accompanying delegation held extensive talks in Amman with government ministers which ended with the conclusion of an agreement paving the way for trade exchanges totalling about \$70 million a year.

Under the agreement, 144 types of Jordanian national products will be available for sale in Sudan while Jordan will be offered a list of 43 types of

Sudanese products from which to import. The agreement was reached upon the conclusion of a week-long Sudanese exhibition of national products, the first ever to be organised in the Kingdom.

According to the JCCC statement Monday, the fair in Khartoum will open up avenues for more trade exchanges between the two countries.

Sudan has such products as sesame, ivory, tea, fruits, sugar, livestock, peanuts, pure boney, and handicrafts to sell Jordan and can import Jordanian medicines, electrical appliances, water pipes, clothes and furniture.

HOME NEWS IN BRIEF

Princess opens art exhibition

AMMAN (Petra) — Her Royal Highness Princess Alia Al Faisal opened Monday at the Royal Cultural Centre an exhibition by Iraqi artist Salma Al Allaq. The week-long exhibition displays 46 oil paintings depicting patriotism and the Palestinian people's struggle against Israeli occupation. This is the fourth exhibition by Ms. Allaq, who is a graduate of Baghdad University and member of the Iraqi Plastic Artist Association.

Arabiyat receives ambassadors

AMMAN (Petra) — Lower House of Parliament Speaker Abdul Latif Arabiyat received at the Parliament Monday Iraqi Ambassador to Jordan Nouri Ismail Alwais. Dr. Arabiyat discussed with Mr. Alwais ways of enhancing cooperation between Jordan and Iraq, particularly in parliamentary fields. Dr. Arabiyat also received Spanish Ambassador in Amman Juan Manuel Cabrera and reviewed with him the situation in the Middle East, the peace process, bilateral relations between the two countries and ways of enhancing them. Dr. Arabiyat extended an invitation to a Spanish parliamentary delegation to visit Jordan.

Kabariti receives ambassadors

AMMAN (Petra) — Labour and acting Foreign Minister Abdul Karim Al Kabariti received in his office at the Foreign Ministry Monday Swedish Ambassador Christian Bausch and Danish Ambassador Christian Oldenburg in separate meetings. Mr. Kabariti reviewed with the two ambassadors the latest developments in the Middle East peace process and issues of common interest.

Ensour leaves for Tokyo conference

AMMAN (Petra) — Minister of Industry and Trade Abdullah Ensour left Amman for Tokyo Monday to take part in the works of a conference

on industrial cooperation between Japan and countries of the East due to open there Wednesday. Dr. Ensour will present to the three-day conference a working paper on investment in Jordan. Dr. Ensour will also meet with a number of delegations to discuss with them scopes of cooperation between Jordan and their countries.

Tree saplings sold at reduced prices

AMMAN (Petra) — The Agriculture Department in the Tafleeh Governorate has started distributing fruit tree saplings to farmers in the governorate at reduced prices. Director of the department Tayseer Shabat said his department was provided with 20,000 olive tree saplings from Al Wala Agricultural Station and 10,000 grape vine saplings from Al Baqoura Station. The department, Mr. Shabat said, distributed these saplings through its centres in the governorate and will distribute almond and apple tree saplings to farmers for reduced prices. He added that beneficiaries from the highlands development project will get the saplings for half the price. The 621 farmers benefiting from the project own 5,485 dunums distributed in the various parts of the governorate.

Decree regulates court cases

AMMAN (Petra) — A Royal decree has been issued endorsing the law on waiving responsibility as a result of the cancellation of the martial law. Under the law, court cases which have not been settled shall be referred to the courts concerned while cases for which the military courts passed verdicts that were not endorsed by the military governor will be referred to the prime minister for decision. However, Petra Bank cases, which have been looked into by the military court, but not settled, shall be referred to the State Security Court. Final verdicts passed by the military courts can be reconsidered in accordance with the conditions and provisions contained in chapter nine of the Criminal Courts Proceedings Law.

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Selective use of U.N.

THE JUST-concluded Moscow conference on multilateral regional talks had its bright side as well as its down side, depending on which way you look at it. One of its major shortcomings on which most people agree, however, was the absence of the U.N. system as a principal partner. This strikes most observers as indeed odd especially in view of the fact that so many country members of the international organisation were invited and did participate in its deliberations. There seems to be a clear contradiction between having so many centres of power in the world involved in the multilateral effort and yet the global organisation that comprises them all was still deliberately kept out of the entire exercise. This perspective comes in stark contrast with even the final communiqué issued by the U.N. Security Council summit concluded at the end of January in New York. To quote but a few lines from the summit's final declaration, there is a central paragraph therein that stipulates that "all member states (of the U.N.) expect the United Nations to play a central role at this crucial stage."

The members of the council stress the importance of strengthening and improving the United Nations to increase its effectiveness. How, therefore, the effectiveness of the international organisation can be promoted and enhanced as long as it is kept at arms length from one of the most formidable regional conflicts in the world? Perhaps the answer lies in another paragraph in the same final communiqué of the council touching on the Middle East situation where it reads that "the members of the council support the Middle East peace process, facilitated by the Russian Federation and the United States, and 'hope' that it will be brought to a successful conclusion on the basis of council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973)."

The magic word in this context is of course a "hope" which clearly implies that the international body seized with the preservation of international peace and security only "hopes" to implement its relevant resolutions and reverse the Israeli aggression and occupation of Arab territories. This is of course a far cry from its language on the Kuwait conflict where the members regarded the Iraqi invasion and occupation of the emirate worthy of stronger language and context.

Clearly, therefore, keeping the U.N. out of the multilateral peace parleys, like keeping it also from the bilateral peace talks, is a clear signal that the Security Council is not yet ready to shoulder its legal and moral responsibilities towards the Arab-Israeli conflict. And as long as this case, Israel would remain free to insist on and dictate its terms on both the bilateral and multilateral peace negotiations. People who do not see the issue this way are called upon to revise or rethink their position. Otherwise, the "big five" in the council that has just celebrated the anniversary of its achievement in the Gulf crisis bear the primary responsibility for any hypocrisy and double standards perceived of them.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

WITH EVERY day that goes by we discover the truth about the reasons behind the U.S.-led aggression on Iraq a year ago, that it was an aggression designed to prevent the Arabs from building up a force that can protect their interests, said Al Rai Arabic daily Monday. The paper said that the aggressors came to the Middle East in defence of their own interests and those of Israel to loot Arab wealth, enforce a new colonial era on the region and ensure Western domination. The paper said that the Americans, who have carried out the aggression in the name of the international legitimacy, do not raise a finger to help the Palestinians regain their usurped lands, neither do they openly declare their intention of ensuring the implementation of U.N. Security Council resolutions 242 and 338 which can guarantee real peace. The problem of the Palestinians is that they are a people without the oil wealth which can attract western colonial powers to come to their aid: they are Arabs who wanted a peaceful and an Arab solution for the Kuwaiti problem and they continue to resist any foreign domination on the Arab World, the paper added. The paper said that the Americans are leading international community into what is called a new world order which, the paper said, was a recipe for ensuring the starvation, backwardness and death of the Arab Nation.

Al Dostour daily Monday commented on a meeting in Cyprus by foreign ministers of non-aligned nations, casting doubt about the non-aligned movement's ability to survive or to have a meaningful role worldwide under the present circumstances and in the absence of a new framework for its status. The daily said that the foreign ministers, who are to review the various international developments of the past two years, are faced with the collapse of the socialist camp as one of two world camps under the old world order and the emergence of the United States as the only superpower, imposing its hegemony on the whole world. Under the present circumstances, the Non-Aligned Movement has no meaning unless basic changes are introduced into its objectives and unless the movement takes practical steps to protect itself and the Third World nations which it represents, said the paper. The paper said that the Non-Aligned Movement should adopt a stand proving its capability to play a positive role in world affairs, otherwise it faces the prospect of becoming totally extinct. The old concept of non-alignment has become obsolete, and the foreign ministers' meeting in Cyprus, said the paper, ought to come up with a new formula not only for the movement's survival but rather to enable the non-aligned nations to have influence on world affairs and prevent the Americans from imposing their evil hegemony and a new era of colonialism.

The View from Fourth Circle

New world sale: Car parts, Djibouti and deaf emperors

By Rami G. Khouri

Few regions of the world have undergone as much change, turmoil, and violence in the last half a century as has the Middle East, and fewer yet have experienced all this without solving any of their fundamental political, social, and economic problems. If a single theme gives common meaning to the many different facets of the Middle East since mid-century, it is the brutal power of history. I do not mean history merely as a chronicle of events, but rather history as a pattern of recurring truths that defines the nature and quality of a people's national life. Our national truths, like our food, landscape, and climate, are very different from those of Arkansas and Sussex. Not necessarily better, but different, and the difference has meanings that cannot be ignored.

To enjoy personal dignity and national stability, Arabs, Muslims, and other Middle Easterners cannot live by the corporate rules of profit, power, perpetual expansion, personal wealth, and individual satisfaction that govern life in the United States. Ours, rather, is a collegial culture that strives for community, collective security of the tribal-national unit, material satisfaction through and for the extended family and personal expression through the common identity of the larger communal unit, whether it be an ethnic group, a religion, or a country. We must adhere to rules inherent in a long historical legacy, established by hundreds of successive generations that have formulated those rules through experiences spanning over ten thousand years.

Patterns of social identity and criteria of national viability have been imposed on us by forces larger than all of us combined — the land, the climate, our strategic location, our natural resources, our large markets, our relations with foreign powers and our preoccupation with spirituality, prophets, and gods. These determine the historical truths I speak of: that our lands cannot accommodate sovereign states that started life with several hundred thousand citizens each, cannot withstand an artificial fragmentation of the region's fragile natural resource base, cannot tolerate income disparities ranging from \$15,000 to \$300 per capita, and cannot long endure communities that try to serve a foreign emperor and then seek that emperor's protection. These are only some of the many truths of history that define us, and compel us to bemoan them. They are the consequence of our being an ancient culture, and they are not sufficiently appreciated, neither by the foreign emperors nor by their local Arab adjuncts, because they are not always easily visible on the surface, and rarely easy for the television camera to record, let alone to absorb or to convey.

Foreign, especially Western, visitors who come to our lands usually find it difficult to penetrate beneath the surface imagery. Tourists in the Arab World, especially in Jordan, Palestine, and Syria, often exclaim at seeing scenes that could have come out of the Bible — a farmer ploughing behind a donkey, dark-robed women threshing wheat, camel and sheep herders living in goat's hair tents, narrow lanes winding through stone-cobbled bazaars. This is tourism, the warm weather, the different landscape, and the physical objects that tourists come to see and to photograph.

But beyond tourism there is real life and politics, a hidden and more complex world with many other dimensions not visible at first sight to the tourist, and not easily captured on film, a world of enduring historical realities based on deeper emotional and political sentiments. The Gulf war last year was essentially tourism, the largest ever Oriental safari, a quick and superficial foray into the Arabian landscape on a massive and violent scale.

Arab nationalism, Islamic fundamentalism, and Middle Eastern democratic pluralism are politics, the older instinct of a nation searching for its true identity, responding to its deeper obligations to its historical roots. It is very difficult to get away from history in our lands and minds, as we were reminded by the Gulf crisis' neat historical time lines. The crisis occurred almost exactly eight hundred years after the great Arab/Muslim leader Salaheddin (Saladin) liberated Jerusalem and the Holy Land from the grip of the

Crusaders; nearly two hundred years after Napoleon invaded Egypt and launched the modern era of Western colonialism in the Middle East; one hundred years after the birth of political Zionism and the start of modern Jewish colonisation in Palestine; seventy years after the British and French artificially carved out most of the modern Arab states; and just over forty years after the establishment of Israel and the dispossession of the Palestinians.

Our historical associations, analogies, and memories may seem peculiar to the West, but for most Arabs they are integral to our reading of the world around us. Many anti-Western demonstrators, especially those driven by Islamic rage, referred to the U.S.-led Western forces arriving in the Gulf as "the new Crusaders." They defined the confrontation of 1990 not only in historical terms dating back eight hundred years, but also by using the parallel of one of the most senseless and ugly clashes between the Orient and the Occident. Anti-coalition Arabs viewed the Western armada of 1990 firmly within the context of the last two hundred years of Western imperial-Zionist meddling in the region. From our Arab perspective, the Gulf crisis had history written all over it. But our history did not start or stop according to the proclamations of brass politicians in Washington and London. Our history was a brutal and powerful master, and our ancient culture a merciless guide.

We thought we knew more about history than George Bush because we had experienced about twelve thousand years more of it than his people had. In 1990, Washington perched delicately at the threshold of a new, unipolar world, in which its power reigned unchallenged, and its democratic principles seemed to sweep the planet. Many people in the power establishments and intellectual salons of Washington and New York talked seriously and innocently about "the end of history." For the United States and the West in general, the Gulf conflict was about nothing less than the future of a world in which the people of the United States had triumphed, and would now rule. Having won the cold war, they dreamed of bigger victories, imagined global spoils, and proclaimed a "new world order" in which the peoples of the earth were not to acknowledge the triumph of the American model but also to finance it, supply it, serve it, honour it and heed it.

A vicious imperial imperative had been activated, and stalked the planet, ready to crush any challenge to a neocolonial order that demanded absolute compliance with its commercial dictates. The new world order was to be composed of nations that bought and sold, and its political elite would comprise those who understood the world in terms of consumption and production. Little surprise, therefore, that the United States leadership would utter the rallying cry of "jobs, jobs, jobs" during the Gulf crisis, and the United States president would wave the same flag of "jobs, jobs, jobs" a year later during his trip with his corporate henchmen in Japan and the Far East.

Desperate to maintain his own job, avert national collapse, and secure his country's place in the world, the American president reverted to the only language he and his people spoke well and understood at all: the language of trade, mercantile advantage, commercial imperative, and corporate nationalism. At the start of 1991 George Bush proclaimed a new world order and presumed to force it and to lead it. At the end of 1991, George Bush travelled to Japan and alternated between being a car parts salesman and an employment agency clerk. The historical drama was as ugly as it was obvious. Like their ancestors who conquered and destroyed the native American Indian nations several hundred years ago, the people of the United States in 1990-1991 were undergoing deep national repositioning, defining their interests and their commercial frontiers by using their two most important tools — violence and money.

Whether expanding westwards in the nineteenth century to conquer new lands on the American continent or extending their might eastwards in the twentieth century to control vital Arab mineral resources in the Gulf, the end was the same: jobs, energy,

land, markets and the other factors of production that were required to maintain the expansion and supremacy of the American civilisation. Seeking their place and role in the world, the American people were emotionally frantic, politically intolerant, diplomatically aggressive, and militarily violent. In their arrogance and materialism, they thought for a moment that they had not only triumphed over the temporal world, but had also quelled history itself. They also believed that they had triumphed over political geography, that they could send their army anywhere in the world they deemed necessary — Panama, Granada, Lebanon, Iraq — to protect their national interest, achieve their goals, and find jobs for a population growing increasingly debt-ridden, lonely, functionally illiterate, violent, and intolerant.

From this perspective, Iraq's occupation of Kuwait was not a minor local problem, but rather a vicious threat to everything that the people of the United States had believed and achieved during the previous two hundred and fifteen years of nationhood. Iraq rudely interrupted the intellectual and political provincialism of a United States leadership that had started to savor the end of history and the triumph of military technology. Iraq defiantly threatened not only to reactivate history, but also to reverse it, perhaps even to avenge its colonial ravages.

We were convinced that history was still alive and operative, and that it could not be ignored in assessing the true dimensions of the Gulf crisis — because the Gulf crisis was only the immediate manifestation of deeper problems that have plagued the Middle East for many decades, and still do. We knew that Saddam Hussein and his many transgressions were only a symptom of the political and economic distortions that the region had endured during the previous half century. The Middle East was full of one-man hands, despots, long-serving autocrats, presidents-for-life, and other political horror shows. Such was the logical result of three-quarters of a century of fractured nationalism, domestic tyranny, Western exploitation rampant militarism, and Zionist challenge.

It is therefore no surprise that the two most significant mass political movements in the Arab World in the last half a century should be Arab nationalism and Islamic fundamentalism. Both are trans-national concepts that look for a human and national identity that corresponds to the lessons of history. Both implicitly reject the concept of dividing the region into 21 Arab states for are they 20 this week, or back to 22? Anybody got a scorecard? Anybody seen Djibouti recently? Who's got Lebanon? Wanna buy a couple of Somalies? Has Bahrain's population reached more than the population of the World Trade Centre buildings? What's greater: eligible Kuwaiti voters or the number of passengers you can get into the British Airways airplane fleet?

The people of our region are seeking new models and a new political order. The transition from the old order to the new will be erratic, often violent, usually confusing, for the new blueprint does not exist. There is no agreement yet on the new rules, for they are being written everyday, by people in every corner of the Arab World looking to build something new, something better, perhaps even something free and lasting.

Do not bother looking for the blueprint in Washington or London, because there you will find only salesmen who seek to buy other lands, or soldiers who bomb them into oblivion if the land is not for sale, or the price is not right. The time and place do not matter — the native American Indians in the 19th Century, Japan in the 1940s, American blacks in the 1950s, Vietnam in the 1960s and 70s, Lebanon in the 1980s, Iraq in the 1990s. The West's corporate truth is harsh and violent. But the truths of history are immutable, and they are our preserve. They will always triumph over the falsehoods of brass young emperors driven by such fear that they will walk the world with cannons in one hand and car parts for sale in the other, oblivious to the fact that there are few buyers left for this merchandise, and deaf to the roar of history about to engulf them.

A new order for children

The following article is a United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) news feature.

THE United Nations Children's Fund has made an impassioned plea for a renewed international commitment to the task of ending mass malnutrition, disease, and illiteracy in the poor world.

Governments of developing countries are indicted for spending, on average, only about 12 per cent of their budgets on basic health and education services for the poor; rich countries are criticised for allocating only about 10 per cent of international aid to health, education, and family planning.

At a time when a new world order is struggling to be born, says the 1992 State of the World's Children report, the voice of the poorest quarter of humanity must be heard. One billion people still lack adequate food, safe water, primary health care, and basic education. "For almost half a century, war and ideological division have distracted attention and diverted resources from this task," says UNICEF. "Those threats are now receding. And the time has come for the world to recommit itself to meeting basic human needs and building a new world order which will reflect mankind's brightest hopes rather than its darkest fears."

Ending the worst of world poverty is far from being a lost cause, says the report. "We have already travelled three quarters of the way towards a world in which every man, woman, and child has adequate food, safe water, basic health care, and at least a primary education. There is no financial or technological barrier to prevent the completion of that journey in our times."

Children

The ones who are being most shamefully failed by the present world order, says UNICEF's Executive Director James Grant, are the quarter of a million children who are dying every week and the millions more who survive into a half-life of malnutrition and almost permanent ill health.

"This is not a threatened tragedy or an impending crisis," says Grant. "It happened today. And it will happen again tomorrow. It is a problem which should

rank in importance with any on the human agenda. But in practice, it has been given a low priority because it is primarily a problem of the poor and the powerless."

There are some signs that this may be changing. "The needs of children are beginning to feature on the political agenda in a way that is unprecedented in UNICEF's forty year history," says Mr. Grant.

The most obvious sign of that new priority was the convening of the World Summit for Children in September 1990. It was the largest gathering of presidents and prime ministers in history, and it met specifically to discuss the problems of the world's children. The outcome was an agreed programme for, among other things, preventing four million child deaths a year, ending mass malnutrition, eradicating polio, and ensuring clean water, family planning services, and basic education.

for all.

"The emergence of such an agreement, at a time when the existing world order is rapidly changing," says Mr. Grant, "means that there is today a better chance than ever before of finding a place on the world's political agenda for the rights of children and for meeting the minimum needs of all families."

Immunisation

The setting of such ambitious targets was prompted by the growing realisation that the world now has both the low-cost means and the outreach capacity to achieve dramatic gains in children's well-being. The most convincing demonstration of that potential has been the successful attempt to reach 80 per cent immunisation coverage by the end of 1990. When that target was set in the late 1970s, vaccines were reaching barely 10 per cent

of the developing world's children. Today, immunisation is saving the lives of over three million children a year and protecting many millions more against infection and malnutrition.

"Such programmes also help to slow population growth," says UNICEF, "because parental confidence in the health and survival of children is vital to family planning efforts."

Skewed spending

It is still too early to tell whether the new commitments made at the World Summit for Children are real or rhetorical. The 159 nations represented agreed to draw up, within one year, national plans for achieving the new goals by the year 2000. So far, over 60 nations have completed such plans and that number is expected to rise to over 100 by early 1992. Some, like

Mexico, have already begun to move; President Carlos Salinas de Gortari has instituted a six-monthly cabinet meeting to review progress towards the goals and approved a 40 per cent increase in the budget of PRO-NASOL, the government programme which aims to provide basic services to the poorest fifth of Mexico's people and which has received \$1.7 billion in 1991 — over 8 per cent of the government's total social expenditure.

A agreed at the summit, some industrialised nations have also been reviewing aid programmes to see how they can promote progress towards the new goals. "The public in the industrialised world has long believed that the great majority of the aid it gives to the developing world is spent on directly meeting the basic needs of the poor," says Mr. Grant. "Whereas in fact only a tiny percentage is used for that purpose." Only about 1 per cent

of aid goes to the primary health care systems which could prevent or treat 80 per cent of the disease and malnutrition in the developing world. Only about 1 per cent goes to family planning services. And less than 1 per cent goes to primary education.

The same distortion can be seen in spending patterns within the developing world itself. UNICEF estimates, for example, that three quarters of all health budgets go to urban hospitals, usually serving only a small minority of the population. According to some estimates, 80 per cent of the \$12 billion allocated each year to water-supply systems is spent on putting private taps in the homes of the not-so-poor and only 20 per cent is going to the wells and standpipes which, with today's technology, could bring clean water to the very poorest communities at low cost. Spending on education is similarly skewed in favour of the few rather than the many.

Finding the funds

In total, the financial resources required to reach all of the ambitious health and education goals agreed at the World Summit for Children would amount to an extra \$20 billion a year throughout the 1990s. UNICEF suggests that two thirds of this sum could be found by the developing countries themselves, leaving one third to be funded by aid programmes. This could be found within existing budgets, says the report, if there were to be a shift in spending, and in aid, towards low-cost services for the many rather than high-cost services for the few.

Another possible way of funding progress would be to allocate a small fraction of military expenditures to the year 2000 goals. The developing world's share of \$12 to \$13 billion a year could be found by diverting about 10 per cent of its military spending. The \$6 to \$7 billion required in outside aid could be found by reallocating only 1 per cent of the rich world's annual military expenditures. Cuts on a much greater scale than this are already under way in many nations, says UNICEF, "but what is missing is any coherent and agreed plan to link even a small part of these potentially vast savings with the desperate needs of the developing world."

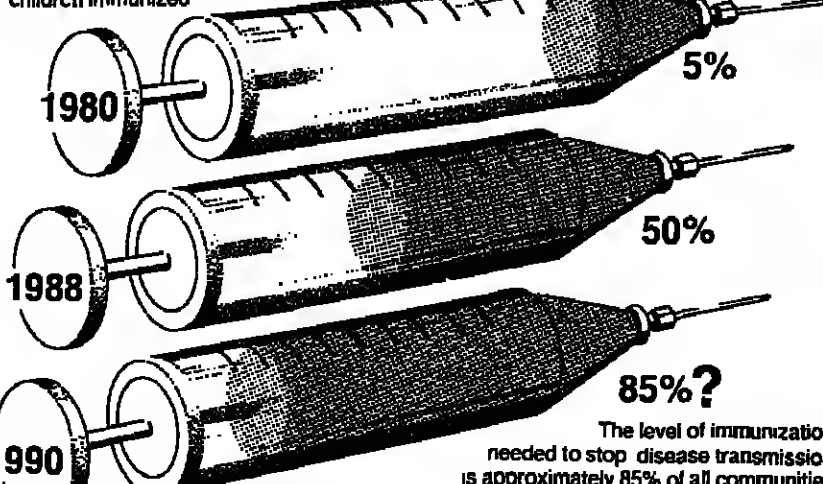
Saving children

This year's 'State of the World's Children' report from UNICEF says that half the child deaths in the world and as much as half of all child malnutrition are caused by either vaccine-preventable diseases or diarrhoeal dehydration. And in both cases, the world has at its disposal a relatively simple low-cost solution. The charts show how far the world has come in applying those solutions — and how far there is still to go.

Immunization

Vaccines are saving a million children a year — but could save 3 million more.

percentage of developing world's children immunized



In 1980, 5% of the developing world's children were immunized and nearly 5 million died every year of vaccine-preventable diseases. Today, 50% are immunized.

Most nations can still achieve the UN target of universal immunization by 1990. But all parents need to know when, where, and why their children must be immunized.

Possible new vaccines against malaria, diarrhoeal diseases, and AIDS mean that the immunization system now being built may be one of the greatest human investments ever made.

مكتبة الامارات

Boris Yeltsin puts Russia firmly on diplomatic map

By Jonathan Lyons
Reuter

WASHINGTON — President Boris Yeltsin, a former Communist Party apparatchik from the industrial heartland, has shown he can lead Russia onto the world stage and make it a force to be reckoned with.

Mr. Yeltsin added one of the few moments of drama to Friday's scripted U.N. Security Council summit with a bold proposal for a global star wars missile defence joining U.S. and Russia technology.

And he was among the strongest advocates on the council for an active, even interventionist, United Nations prepared to head off trouble and defend human rights around the globe. More importantly, Mr. Yeltsin proved he could assume the diplomatic mantle of his predecessor and rival Mikhail Gorbachev, sweeping aside doubts his interest or abilities in foreign affairs.

Russian officials had made no secret they were looking beyond the U.N. gathering — called to chart the post-cold war world — to a one-on-one chat at President George Bush's Camp David retreat on Saturday.

It would, they said, put the final seal of approval on what Mr. Yeltsin and aides like to call the "new" Russia and banish forever the notion that Mr. Gorbachev's deft diplomacy was irreplaceable. They were not disappointed.

The two leaders emerged calling one another "George" and

"Boris" and seemed generally at ease. They agreed to swap summit visits later this year and Mr. Bush offered to give serious consideration to the Russian global star wars plan.

"I have a very warm feeling in my heart about what he has done, and is trying to do, and I consider him my friend," Mr. Bush told a brief news conference.

If the Americans issued no concrete promises on arms control, aid or missile defence, Mr. Yeltsin could still head for home with a joint declaration that the two countries no longer regarded one another as potential enemies.

Mr. Yeltsin, 61 years old to the day, told reporters before he talks the meeting was the best birthday present he ever had.

The Russian president, known more for his heavy-handed style at home than finesse abroad, also impressed U.S. congressional leaders.

"I think there is a great degree of confidence in his leadership. There is a high degree of confidence in the congress and the country," said Thomas Foley, speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, after a one-hour meeting at the Russian embassy.

"I was very impressed with how he handled himself," said House Democratic leader Richard Gephardt. "We listened to him, we heard him out."

Despite lack of specific agreements, Mr. Bush and Mr. Yeltsin left every indication that vast nuclear weapons reductions

would occur in the not-so-distant future.

"We will work to remove any remnants of cold war hostility, including taking steps to reduce our strategic arsenals," they said in a six-point declaration that laid the groundwork for future U.S.-Russian relations.

Mr. Bush this week proposed slashing U.S. nuclear warheads to about 60 per cent of current levels and for the first time expressed a willingness to reduce U.S. submarine missile.

Mr. Yeltsin responded with calls for substantially deeper cuts in nuclear missiles. However, he does not control all the former Soviet missiles, which are spread among other newly independent states as well.

Not all aspects of the Yeltsin trip, which began in London on Thursday and included the U.N. summit, Washington and a final stop in Ottawa, went so smoothly.

Pavel Voshchanov, the presidential spokesman, caused an uproar when he told reporters on Friday the strategic nuclear missiles of the former Soviet Union had had their targeting instructions removed.

He later softened the claim, admitting only a "political decision" to detarget the weapons had been taken but not yet implemented.

Experienced foreign ministry officials, largely frozen out of the Yeltsin inner circle, just threw up their hands in frustration.

Leaders try to make sense of new world

By Alan Elsner

Reuter

NEW YORK — Grappling to come to terms with a world in flux, international leaders have taken refuge in a seemingly unending round of summits and conferences.

The summit of the United Nations Security Council's 15 members in New York was just the latest, but far from the last, in an unprecedented series of gatherings which have world leaders rushing from one meeting place to the next, with virtually no time to draw breath between them.

In the past 10 days alone, U.S. Secretary of State James Baker has presided over a 47-nation gathering to coordinate aid to the former Soviet Union in Washington and a 27-nation conference on Middle East regional issues in Moscow.

He also spent three hours in Prague at a foreign ministers' forum of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, which last year had 34 members and now has 48, before rushing to New York for the Security Council summit.

But what do all these meetings achieve?

"It's almost as if world leaders believe that if they keep having meetings, everything will be all right," said Kim Holmes, an analyst with the Heritage Foundation in Washington.

"We have a world that has changed and is still changing and leaders are having trouble understanding it. So they take refuge in a lot of meetings, partly in the hope that as long as people keep talking they won't be shooting," he said.

The biggest change is of course the end of the cold war and the

collapse of the former Soviet Union. As a result, old organisations like NATO have lost their traditional missions while others like the United Nations have seen their possibilities for action expand.

The problem is that nobody yet knows which way the republics of the former Soviet Union will go. Will they emerge as Western-style, free market democracies or could they spiral into chaos, authoritarianism and, in the case of the Central Asian republics, militant Islamic fundamentalism?

"The world has changed, it's no longer that rather grisly stability of East and West. That has been changed and now one has a whole series of regional conflicts," said British Prime Minister John Major.

Likewise, French President Francois Mitterrand told the U.N. summit that the world was looking for signposts to guide it to safety in an era of "disorder and unpredictability."

"The only constant today is change," Mr. Mitterrand said. But organisations like NATO don't disappear just because of the end of the cold war. Instead, they hold meetings to define new functions, co-opt new members and arrange more meetings, preferably at head of government level.

Each organisation has to protect its international bureaucracy. In the absence of anything else to do, what better way to employ armies of officials than to organising new meetings.

Politicians like summits as well because they provide the opportunity to strut on a prestigious world stage, basking in world media attention and breathing rarified summit air. Opposition leaders have to stay looking dowdy and provincial.

The CSCE, which for years was viewed as an irrelevance, now has a secretariat in Prague, a Conflict Prevention Centre in Vienna, an Office of Free Elections in Warsaw and frequent foreign ministers meetings and summits, the

next of which is coming up in March in Helsinki.

But when a civil war erupted in member-state Yugoslavia, all the CSCE's horse and all its men were powerless to stop the fighting.

Europe used to be thought of stretching from the Atlantic to the Urals. But CSCE now encompasses territory from Vancouver to Vladivostok, including several purely Asian states.

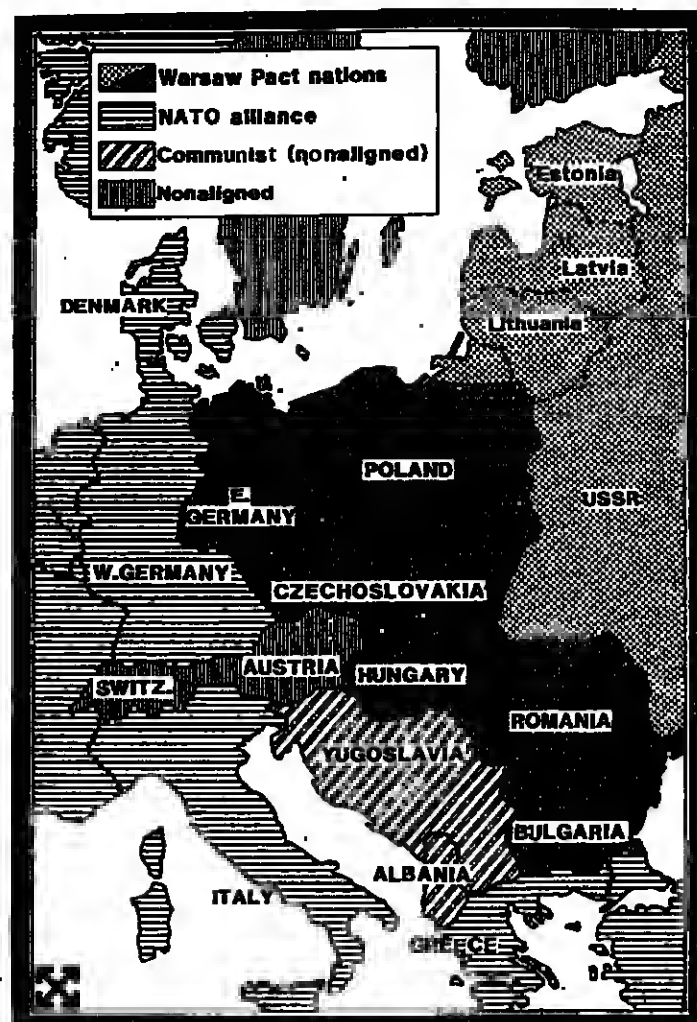
And though the meetings keep happening, there is no agreement on how CSCE fits in with the European Community, which now has 12 members but could soon grow to 15 or 18 or more. And how does that overlap with the Western European union, the Council of Europe, the European Free Trade Association and NATO? Nobody seems to know.

On the economic front, there are the Group of Five, the Group of Seven, the Group of 15 and the Group of 24, whose members are the same as those of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development. Each has its own tasks and regular meetings.

Asia too has its meetings. There is the Asian-Pacific Economic Cooperation which was founded two years ago with 12 members and now has 15, and the six-nation Association of South East Asian Nations which hold expanded ministerial meetings with half a dozen other nations once a year.

The Middle East peace process is also spawning lots of new bodies. After last week's regional talks in Moscow, there will be separate gatherings on arms control in Washington, water resources in either Turkey or Austria, the environment in Tokyo, economic development in Brussels and refugees in Canada.

The world environment is another fruitful source of conferences. Coming up soon, look out for a climate change conference in February in New York, which will lead to an earth summit in June in Rio de Janeiro with 160 world leaders in attendance.



Highest quarters approved Habash's visit

(Continued from page 1)

affair was the head of the French Red Cross who was forced to resign Monday for her role in arranging Dr. Habash's hospital stay in France.

As the media and opposition stepped up pressure for ministers to quit, Georgina Dufoix, 48, a longtime friend of President Francois Mitterrand, was forced out by the Red Cross executive.

"They asked me to go, I am not leaving today but I will leave the Red Cross on Friday," the former health minister and government spokeswoman told reporters.

Ms. Dufoix resigned as a presidential advisor last Thursday. She admitted to a political blunder in failing to inform the president or his staff but defended the decision to treat Dr. Habash for a stroke on humanitarian grounds.

The affair has plunged Mr. Mitterrand into his most serious crisis for years.

Five senior officials have been fired since the leader of the PFLP was flown to a Paris clinic for medical treatment last Wednesday.

Sources close to Mr. Mitterrand said he would not be stampeded into a cabinet reshuffle although he was furious at having been embarrassed over the affair.

In the firing line were Foreign Minister Roland Dumas, who faced a grilling behind closed doors from parliament's foreign affairs committee on Monday, and Interior Minister Philippe Marchand, accused across the political spectrum of incompetence.

"Out with them" screamed the

right-wing Quotidien de Paris in a banner headline.

"The Habash affair reveals severe errors in the functioning of the executive," the newspaper said.

Former President Valery Giscard d'Estaing said the blunder showed the government had ceased to function. He demanded early parliamentary elections.

Adding to Mr. Mitterrand's

embarrassment, Michel Rocard, the Socialist removed as prime minister last year to make way for the unpopular Edith Cresson, said on television the affair was not over the foreign and interior ministers should go.

Even the left-wing daily Liberation, which usually backs the government, said the Habash affair showed what it called "the Mitterrand system" had led to a breakdown in responsibility.

Algerian authorities crackdown on radicals

(Continued from page 1)

where on Friday.

According to the government, only three people died in clashes between police and the faithful in other cities around the country.

The government added that 42 fundamentalist religious leaders were arrested between Jan. 17-25.

Since Friday, 15 religious leaders and party activists have been arrested in several towns, said official sources who spoke on condition of anonymity. Others were still being sought.

Among those arrested were three Muslim clerics in Tipaza, 30 miles west of Algiers. They were detained for allegedly slandering state officials and inciting disobedience, state radio reported Monday.

News reports also mentioned the arrests of a local Islamic leader in northern Algeria, two mayors and a teacher in western Algeria and six people for allegedly starting trouble inside a mosque in eastern Algeria.

A court in the central town of Bechar sentenced a cleric to two months in jail Monday on charges of incitement, the radio reported. In Abdaia, southwest of Bechar, a teacher who was active with the Islamic Front also was sentenced to two months for incitement and rebellion, the radio reported.

Police in the northern town of Jijel used tear gas Sunday to disperse a crowd gathered outside a courthouse where a militant fundamentalist was being tried, the radio said.

The FIS, confident of popular support in the long term, is officially exhorting its supporters to be patient.

Behind that single word, the FIS has evolved a careful strategy to withstand the authorities' attempts to smother the movement.

Local leaders, the cutting edge of the FIS now that its national figures have been arrested, are gambling on divisions among the country's new leaders and on an eventual popular uprising against them.

Hawatmeh wants Madrid formula corrected

(Continued from page 1)

Palestinian delegation to Madrid and Washington, to attend the Moscow talks as proof that the partial representation proved "useless."

At his press conference and in an earlier interview with the Jordan Times, Mr. Hawatmeh explained his view of what happened between the beginning of the first phase in Madrid and the opening of the Moscow conference, which the Palestinians refused to attend unless their demands for wider representation were met.

There were three major reasons why the Palestinians, directed by the Palestine Liberation Organisation decision-making group in Tunis — the PLO executive committee — decided that partial representation would do no more, he said.

First, political groupings backed by members of the Palestinian delegation sent messages to the PLO executive committee in Tunis clearly indicating that participation by the Palestinians without including representatives from Jerusalem and the diaspora would be unacceptable.

"Recent events have made it possible for the Palestinian people to take their leadership to task — they must now answer for their decisions as never before," Mr. Hawatmeh said. "It is the Palestinian people — under occupation and in exile who told the PLO what to do about Mos-

cow — this is very important — it is democracy at work."

Second, the Palestinian delegates who had attended the Madrid and Washington phases of the peace process realised that the political agenda for the Palestinians was limited to self-rule. Promises of other things on the agenda were "sand castles," he said.

"Deportations, settlements, arrests, expropriations — all that continued," leading the Palestinians to harden their stand, he continued.

"The issue of self-rule sounds good. It is very tricky, however, because self-rule in the Israeli definition means no rule on land, water or other natural resources. The Palestinians can also be sent to Alaska and have self-rule there," he said. "At that point the Palestinians were literally forced to comply with the dictates of the United States, which said 'self-rule only is on your agenda.'"

The third reason that Mr. Hawatmeh cited for the "rectification of the Palestinians stand," was that the U.S. had "disassociated itself from its role as a fair co-sponsor when it said that it would only intervene if and when 'all groups asked for its intervention.' That move gave Israel the right of veto.

The DFLP leader said the Palestinians had "no problem" being associated with Jordan in the joint delegation. The real problem, however, is that the

Israelis, and behind them the Americans, want to treat Palestinians as inhabitants of some place, and not as people, he said.

"Jordan went to Moscow as a separate delegation," he said. "This is very significant. One of the obstacles which the Americans and Israelis had imposed as a requirement for our participation in the talks has now disappeared," he added. "While for us being a joint delegation poses no problem, it is good to know that we have a say in the issue. Otherwise this peace will be an imposed peace — something which has failed many times before."

Arab coordination

Mr. Hawatmeh called on Arab countries to close ranks in order to present a coordinated Arab position in the peace talks. "More coordinated is needed amongst the countries involved in the bilateral talks," he said, adding that the next round of talks, scheduled to begin later this month should be preceded by a common strategy of Jordan, the Palestinians, Syria and Lebanon.

The Moscow multilateral conference emphasised that the rift between Arab countries as a result of the Gulf war was "very deep," he said. It seems that some Arab countries, the Gulf states, may be ready to make a separate peace with Israel regardless of what happens to Arab occupied lands of Palestine, Syria, Lebanon and Jordan.

"Therefore, it is pertinent that steps to reconcile the Arab efforts

should precede the continuation of talks with Israel. In Moscow they (the Arabs) did not even talk to us."

The DFLP leader said steps to coordinate an inter-Arab panel, both on the leadership and parliamentary levels "have begun."

Morocco, Algeria, Yemen, Jordan and the PLO are already involved in a series of steps aimed at inter-Arab reconciliation, he said.

"The aim is to create a dialogue on both the leadership and parliamentary levels that will create a common popular and official position on matters that are of concern to all of us," Libya and Sudan may also join the group sometime soon, he added.

"The rift among Arabs created by the Gulf war must be mended or the peace talks would ultimately lead to a dangerous polarisation which could mark the beginning of regional conflicts," Mr. Hawatmeh warned.

"How do you want to deal with

the issues of refugees, water and borders with the Israelis if there is no Arab agreement?"

He further announced that what he called a "peoples conference" in support of wider representation of the Palestinians at the peace talks is being planned. "We want it to take place in Jerusalem and we hope that popular leaders living under occupation as well as those in the diaspora and a maximum number of Palestine National Council members will be able to attend. The conference should take place before the bilateral talks are scheduled to continue in Washington."

The Palestinian leader stressed that the PLO, of which his group is a constituent member, would have to formally join the peace talks at some stage. "The Palestinians must be fully represented. The United Nations recognises the PLO as the sole and legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. So why aren't we there?" he said.

Non-Aligned Movement advocates democracy

(Continued from page 1)

chaired by Mr. Iacovou had been doing the same thing since its establishment in 1988.

"We must seize the opportunity to talk frankly and thoroughly to ensure that the movement will continue to be not only relevant but essential in the sweeping international events," Mr. Atas said.

Among the ministers attending the meeting were those from Jordan, Iraq, Iran, Syria and Libya.

Commenting on the speeches during a break, Syrian Foreign Minister Farouk Al Sharaa told reporters: "Developing countries have specialised problems that must be addressed."

About the need for democratisation, he said: "This should not only be confined within each country, it has to be a process in international relations as well."

Asked whether there were any specific plans for democratisation in Syria, he said, "no, nothing specific."

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U.S. Dollar in International Markets

Currency	New York Close Date: 3/1/1992	Tokyo Close Date: 3/2/1992
Sterling Pound	1.7855	1.7935
Deutsche Mark	1.6115	1.6045
Swiss Franc	1.4330	1.4278
French Franc	5.4880	5.4765
Japanese Yen	125.80	125.66
European Currency Unit	1.2730	1.2716

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Japan records biggest trade surplus in 1991

TOKYO (R) — A slump in oil prices and sluggish imports have caused the biggest trade surplus in Japan's history and the gap is likely to widen in 1992, economists have said.

The Ministry of Finance (MOF) announced that Japan's unadjusted trade surplus rose to \$103.29 billion from a \$63.53 billion surplus a year earlier.

The current account — the broadest measure of trade in goods and services — in 1991 more than doubled to \$72.60 billion from \$35.76 billion.

"With expectations of oil prices staying weak and a slow recovery in the Japanese economy, the surplus is likely to widen this year," said Kusuo Aoki, deputy manager at the Yamachi Research Institute of Securities and Economics.

"As long as the government does not stimulate the economy, this trend of a growing surplus will not stop," he said.

The slowdown in the Japanese economy has dampened consumer appetite for luxury imported goods such as European cars and paintings, and there are no signs demand will pick up.

Officials were putting their best face on the situation.

One MOF official said a rapid

expansion in the surplus was unlikely in the long run but admitted that lower import prices may widen the current account surplus in the near-term.

Prime Minister Kiichi Miyazawa told parliament Tuesday the growth of the current account surplus in fiscal 1991/92 ending in March was mainly because of one-off factors such as falling imports of luxury paintings and cars and lower oil prices.

"Such temporary drops in imports are likely to normalise in the coming fiscal year, helping to reduce the current account surplus from the current (1991/92) year," said Mr. Miyazawa.

But few economists agreed with Mr. Miyazawa, saying his comments were politically motivated ahead of his trip to the United States, which started Friday.

"It is lip service to (U.S. President George) Bush," said a Japanese bank economist.

"Looking at the rapid improvement in the first 20-day trade figure, it is difficult to expect Japan's trade surplus will decrease all of a sudden," he added.

The MOF also announced that the trade deficit in the first 20 days of January narrowed to \$15.97 million from a \$993.88

million deficit in the same period a year earlier.

Japan always posts a deficit in this period because of seasonal factors. It does not indicate any change in the growing surplus, economists said.

The surge in the current account surplus for all of 1991 was due to a sharp decline in gold imports and lower import prices, including lower oil prices, the MOF official said.

The yen's strength against the dollar increased the value of Japan's exports while reducing the value of imports, he said. The average dollar rate in 1991 was 134.68 yen, down from 144.48 in the previous year, he added.

Average oil prices in 1991 fell to \$20.37 per barrel from \$22.29 the previous year.

In December alone, the unadjusted trade surplus rose to \$12.70 billion from a \$8.10 billion surplus a year earlier.

While exports rose only three per cent to \$28.7 billion from December the previous year, imports dropped nearly 20 per cent to \$15.99 billion from \$19.66 billion.

In December, the current account surplus rose to \$10.08 billion from \$3.79 billion a year earlier and \$7.26 billion in November.

Saudis bring back cash from abroad

MANAMA, Bahrain (R) — Saudi Arabians sent an estimated 11 billion riyals (\$2.93 billion) abroad during the Gulf crisis but all the money has now been repatriated, a senior Saudi official was quoted as saying.

"Only about 11 billion riyals, which represented hardly six per cent of the private sector's savings, escaped outside during the Gulf crisis... but it has all returned," Deputy Commerce Minister Abdul Rahman Al Zamel told the Saudi daily Arab News.

Investors transferred savings out of the Gulf region after Iraq invaded Kuwait in August 1990, but the Saudi economy has boomed since the end of the Gulf war in February last year.

"The conflict only temporarily halted business activity. It made a sort of stoppage because things were not clear," Sheikh Zamel said.

He said the current high level of liquidity was reflected in various areas including the stock market.

The official Saudi share index generally rose last year as cash-rich investors scrambled for new shares. Share flotations by three Saudi companies, the first since 1989, were heavily oversubscribed.

Iraq offers work to Arab oil firms

NICOSIA (Agencies) — Iraqi Oil Minister Usama Al Hiti said Sunday companies from the Organisation of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OAPEC) should work in Iraq despite the U.N. economic blockade, the Iraqi News Agency (INA) reported.

"Iraq has firm convictions regarding the need for inter-Arab cooperation in all fields, especially the oil industry," the agency quoted Mr. Hiti as telling visiting Jordanian and Algerian journalists.

He said Iraq wanted to reinforce the role of Arab companies affiliated to the 10-member regional group by giving them the opportunity to work in Iraq.

INA, monitored by the British Broadcasting Corporation, quoted the minister as referring to "attempts to destabilise the oil market by overproducing and flooding it."

Iraq, the largest oil exporter after Saudi Arabia before the Gulf war, is discussing with the U.N. a resumption of its oil exports. It has so far rejected terms attached to Iraqi exports as infringing its sovereignty.

The Middle East Economic Survey (MEES) reported Mon-

day that an agreement between Iraq and the United Nations on a partial resumption of Iraq's oil exports, the country's economic lifeline, is still a long way off.

The respected oil industry newsletter, published in Nicosia, noted that Baghdad is in the end likely to accept the main provisions of the U.N. resolution allowing the limited easing of sanctions.

MEES said that "nothing is likely to be finalised" in talks between U.N. Assistant Secretary-General Kofi Annan and Iraq's ambassador to the U.N., Abdul Amir Al Anbari, in Vienna Wednesday.

"All in all, it looks as though at least one more round of talks, and quite possible more, will be necessary before anything concrete emerges," the weekly newsletter said.

"And even then... any deal reached at expert level could easily be torpedoed by overriding political cross-currents," it warned.

An initial negotiating session in Vienna Jan. 8-10 failed to break the deadlock over Baghdad's rejection of the U.N. decision last August to allow Iraq to export oil worth \$1.6 billion over six months to pay for badly needed food and medicine.

Iraq's oil exports were halted when the trade embargo was imposed. The United Nations says the sanctions will remain until the Iraqi leadership is removed from power.

The sanctions are biting ever deeper and causing worsening hardship to most of Iraq's 17 million people.

Iraq's Planning Minister Samal Majid Faraj, said recently that the U.N. embargo cost Baghdad an estimated \$17 billion between August 1990 and January 1991, including \$10 billion in lost oil revenue.

Iraq rejected the U.N. plan for limited oil exports because it said \$1.6 billion was not enough for its needs and that the "colonial" conditions laid down by the world body violated its sovereignty.

Baghdad objects to the deduction of 30 per cent of the proceeds as war reparations of Kuwait and United Nations' insistence of keeping tight control of how the money is spent.

Iraq wants to sell oil worth \$2.4 billion and import vital spare parts for its war-damaged oil industry.

Baghdad claims that after repairing oil facilities, it can export one million barrels a day now and expects to be able to boost that to 1.6 million barrels a day later this year.

Diplomatic sources, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the Americans and British have indicated they are prepared to be flexible in meeting Iraq's objections to infringements on its economic sovereignty.

This, they said, is because the Western powers are nervous about appearing to be the cause of the misery and suffering the sanctions are causing in Iraq.

The United Nations itself is anxious to resolve the issue because some of the proceeds from Baghdad's oil sales will go to fund its operations in Iraq and generate cash for the compensation fund for war reparations.

Sudan floats currency, to remove subsidies

KHARTOUM (R) — Sudan floated its currency Monday, abandoning the effort to maintain a hugely overvalued official exchange rate.

Finance Minister Abdul Rahim Hamdi announced the decision in a sweeping package of economic reforms for a nation bankrupted by civil war and natural disaster.

He also ended most import controls, increased pensions and the minimum wage, raised prices for bread and sugar, and warned consumers that heavy subsidies could not continue much longer.

The exchange value of the Sudanese pound will, starting immediately, be the rate set by commercial banks, Mr. Hamdi said.

The banks already traded currency for most commercial imports at a floating rate of about 90 pounds to the dollar — six times the abandoned official rate.

Dealers said the scrapping of the official rate was not expected to cause any sudden move in the commercial rate.

"A committee drawn from the

commercial banks will determine the rate of the dollar on a daily basis or in a period it deems fit," the minister said. The government and the Bank of Sudan (the central bank) will never intervene, whatever happens to the rate of the dollar.

Importers no longer need licences to bring in goods except for 15 commodities which will be controlled by the customs department, Mr. Hamdi said. He did not name the commodities.

The switch to a more liberal economic system may open the way for Africa's biggest country, stretching up the Nile from Egypt to the heart of black Africa, to restore its credit with the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

Sudan is more than \$2 billion behind in payments to the IMF. It has been barred from receiving new IMF-backed loans since 1986.

IMF negotiators held talks in Khartoum in January, pressing the government of Lieutenant-General Omar Hassan Al Bashir to decontrol prices, devalue the pound and limit government ex-

penditure.

The Sudan People's Liberation Army has been fighting since 1983 to end domination of the south by the Arabised north. The country has also suffered drought, famine and several big floods.

Mr. Hamdi said that from Feb. 1 the minimum monthly salary of employees in both the public and private sector would rise from 900 pounds to 1,500 pounds, plus 100 pounds for each of the worker's children up to a maximum of three.

Pensioners would get 500 pounds more a month, he said.

The price of a pound (about half a kilogramme) of sugar was being increased at once from seven pounds to 10 pounds. The price of bread would also be increased and the size of loaves reduced.

Mr. Hamdi said the government was subsidising wheat flour and to the tune of one billion pounds and petrol by 7.7 billion pounds a year, which could not be tolerated much longer.

Critics continue attack on Russian reforms

MOSCOW (R) — A leading conservative economist Monday launched a new attack on the Russian government's economic reform programme and Deputy Prime Minister Gennady Burbulis acknowledged that not all was going to plan.

Pavel Bunich told the daily Pravda newspaper that a meeting of economists over the weekend had agreed that the reform programme, designed to introduce a market economy, had to be changed.

"It's not worth confronting the government but we cannot agree with all its proposals and putting into effect," he said after the economists met Russian parliamentary head Ruslan Khasbulatov.

"The state programme is in need of urgent coordination. Its main flaw is the poor social protection of the people, he pointed out.

Prices were freed Jan. 2 as the first stage of the reforms and then soared beyond the reach of millions of ordinary Russians. But production did not increase as planned.

"The most important thing is to carry things out as calmly as possible, without unnecessary stress, and not to bring about a dangerous situation fraught with the risk of a socio-economic outburst," Mr. Bunich said.

Demonstrations against the rises have been held across the republic. Communist groups are planning a protest march to the Russian parliament Sunday.

Mr. Khasbulatov has called for the resignation of Russian leader Boris Yeltsin and his government over the reforms.

Mr. Burbulis told Russian Television late Sunday that there had not been "even a hint of a rise in productivity" since the price rises. "This is a signal to the government," he said.

The conservative Rossiiskaya Gazeta newspaper, quoted figures from state statistics committee Goskomstat, Monday said oil and coal production were still falling while a crisis was developing in the metallurgical sector.

"The fall in production is taking on frightening proportions," it said.

Rules of supply and demand would normally mean lower demand for more expensive goods resulting in lower prices. But in most of Russia, producers have cut output rather than prices.

Rossiiskaya Gazeta said light industrial production fell by 15 to 30 per cent in the first 19 days of January, while believers of meat, cereals and milk fell by a third or more.

Some economists say the government should have privatised state enterprises before freeing prices, arguing that there is no incentive for firms to cut prices as they do not face any serious competition.

Mr. Burbulis said the government had to put a curb on monopolies "in view of their super-aggressive conduct" but gave no details.

He said prices were stabilising, and were falling in some parts of the republic, and he vowed that the government would not raise prices in February.

The government would "finish off those who are now busy oppressing the population through prices," he said.

Mr. Bunich said the government had to cut a recently imposed value added tax of 28 per cent as well as taxes on profits and exports.

stimulates exports and limits imports. Here it is the opposite," he said.

Rossiiskaya Gazeta said the government team headed by Russian economic chief Yegor Gaidar had been far too optimistic when it said shelves would fill up two to three weeks after prices were freed.

"January did not make us happier or richer but our life was shaken to the foundations," it said.

Mr. Yeltsin Sunday returned from a triumphant trip to the United States to face growing public disquiet with the chaos sparked by his government's economic reform programme.

During his three-day visit Mr. Yeltsin addressed the United Nations and held talks with U.S. President George Bush, setting the seal on what Russia hopes will be a new era in superpower relations.

But like Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev before him, Mr. Yeltsin is now finding foreign policy success counts for little amongst a population worried about lack of money and food.

An angry crowd of several hundred pro-communist demonstrators gathered by the Lenin Museum in central Moscow Sunday to denounce the freeing of prices, which has plunged millions of Russians below the poverty line.

"Give us back (state planning agency) Gosplan, socialism and the right to work," read a banner waved by one old woman.

Russian Television Sunday quoted Goskomstat as saying the minimum monthly salary a person needed to avoid starvation was 1,300 roubles. The average wage across the republic is not more than 700 roubles.

Pravda Saturday said a poll conducted one week ago showed 72 per cent of Russians were not satisfied with life and 44 per cent complained price rises were impossible to stem.

"No doubt these figures have grown by now," it added.

Resistance to the price rises, part of a wide-ranging government economic plan for the transfer to a market economy, is not confined to the general population.

Russian Television Saturday said Mr. Khasbulatov had met senior economists to discuss how

the overall plan could be changed.

It said participants had agreed that "after the first month of radical economic reforms it is clear that the government's course needs to be corrected."

Those who took part, including noted economists Leonid Abalkin, Stepan Sitaryan and Pavel Bunich, declared people should be the first priority.

"We need the market, of course, but not at the cost of impoverishment. Otherwise we will end up with not the market but catastrophe instead," was how the television summed up the mood of the meeting.

There is little evidence the price rises are working. Rules of supply and demand would normally mean lower demand for goods resulting in lower prices.

But this has not happened in most of Russia, where producers have cut output rather than lower prices.

"The result of opinion polls show public intolerance is growing as prices disappear up into the

Serbs in Croatia vow to hold out against U.N. deployment plan

BELGRADE (R) — Serb leaders in Croatia vowed Monday to hold out against a United Nations plan to deploy peacekeeping troops in the former Yugoslav republic unless the plan is changed to meet their demands.

A senior member of the government in Krajina, Croatia's main Serb enclave, said its leaders had refused to bow to pressure by the Yugoslav presidency to accept the plan.

The presidency, after three days of grueling talks in Belgrade, said Sunday that Krajina's parliamentary leader, Mile Pajalić, had accepted the plan under which 10,000 U.N. troops would be sent to Croatia.

But other Krajina leaders denied Pajalić had acted on their behalf and said they would continue to reject the plan.

"We are not against the arrival of U.N. forces but we would like to talk to (U.N. special envoy) Cyrus Vance again and modify the plan," Jovan Katic, Krajina's

deputy prime minister and minister for industry, told Reuters.

Krajina's defiance, and opposition by Croatian authorities, left the U.N. plan in tatters and further dented hopes of ending seven months of fighting in Croatia.

More than 6,000 people have been killed in the fighting which erupted last June after Croatia declared its independence from the Yugoslav Federation. It won international recognition as an independent state on Jan. 15.

Opposition from Krajina also isolated its president, Milan Babic, and his government in a rift with Serbian and Yugoslav leaders who need the backing of all the warring sides if the U.N. is to station forces in Croatia.

Mr. Babic says he welcomes the peacekeepers in principle but wants them deployed only along Krajina's border.

He says the plan brokered by Mr. Vance, a former U.S. secretary of state, would endanger

Serbs in Croatia because the Yugoslav army would be withdrawn from Krajina and local Serbs would have to disarm.

"The president of the Republic of Serbian Krajina, Milan Babic, as well as the government of Serbian Krajina, did not accept the plan on deployment of U.N. forces on (its) territory," Mr. Babic said in a statement.

Mr. Katic added: "He (Pajalić) was not authorized to say anything. He did not have the consent of the (Krajina) government or parliament. Obviously he was under pressure and was exhausted."

Croatian leaders object to key parts of the plan, fearing it could lead to the loss of land seized by the Serbs.

Serbs control about one third of Croatian territory, including Krajina, which refuses to be considered part of the newly independent Croatian state.

Many Yugoslavs and foreign diplomats believe the U.N. plan

is the only hope of security peace in Yugoslavia, where a shaky truce has held for a month despite frequent violations.

Croatian radio said Serb irregular forces fired mortars and artillery and advanced on Croatian defence lines in Djakovo in eastern Croatia early Monday but the attack was repulsed.

The Belgrade-based news agency Tanjug said a Serbian policeman was killed in an attack by Croatian fighters near Sombor in eastern Croatia Sunday.

Five people were reported killed in earlier clashes in Croatia at the weekend.

Tension is also mounting in Bosnia-Herzegovina, a republic where Serbs, Croats and Muslims live side by side.

The Belgrade-based Tanjug News Agency said Stjepan Kijic had resigned as leader of the republic's branch of the Croatian Democratic Union over a split in the party but gave no details.

Azeri troops bombard Karabakh

MOSCOW (R) — Azeri troops bombarded the capital of the disputed region of Nagorno-Karabakh through the night, killing one person and injuring several others, Armenia said Monday.

A security aide to Armenian President Levon Ter-Petrosyan said 10 rockets and 20 mortar bombs were fired into Stepanakert. Houses in the nearby Armenian villages of Karintak were also damaged in an attack by armoured cars.

"Relatively speaking, though, one could say the situation has stabilised," aide Ashot Manachuryan said from the Armenian capital Yerevan.

ITAR-TASS News Agency quoted the Nagorno-Karabakh directorate of interior affairs as saying armoured cars and infantry attacked the Armenian village of Khramont Monday morning. "Armenian self-defence forces are repelling the attacks ... no casualties have been reported," a spokesman said.

Armenian militants have been fighting Azeri forces over four years for control of Nagorno-Karabakh, a largely Armenian enclave in Azerbaijan.

More than 1,000 people have died in the conflict.

Armenia's President Levon Ter-Petrosyan said Sunday he might appeal for United Nations peacekeeping troops to be sent to the strife-torn enclave.

But he told a news conference at the Davos World Economic Forum in Switzerland he hoped the new Commonwealth of Independent States, which replaced the Soviet Union and to which both Armenia and Azerbaijan belong, would agree to send a



Levon Ter-Petrosyan

peace force.

"If the situation gets worse and the (largely Armenian) population of Nagorno-Karabakh are threatened by the Azerbaijani army, then we would ask the United Nations to send a force," Mr. Ter-Petrosyan said.

"This may have been an internal issue when we were all part of the Soviet Union but now we are independent. It is an international issue."

President Ayaz Matalibov of Azerbaijan told reporters in Baku earlier that his administration was simply trying to "suppress terrorism" in Nagorno-Karabakh.

"Armenia is supporting terrorism. They must stop," said Mr. Matalibov who with several other presidents of former Soviet republics is attending the forum, an annual gathering of world business and political leaders.

Mr. Matalibov said he had discussed the latest flare-up in which Azeris and Armenians

fought fiercely in and around Nagorno-Karabakh, he gave no details.

Mr. Ter-Petrosyan also said they had talked on the sidelines of the forum about the fighting. "You would be surprised. President Matalibov and I get on very well. I think he is sincere and wants a political solution," he said.

"But he does not control the situation in Azerbaijan. He faces a very strong opposition that does not allow him to follow the path of compromise."

Mr. Ter-Petrosyan denied Armenia had sent weapons to Nagorno-Karabakh.

Azerbaijani says Armenian fighters in the enclave have relatively advanced weapons including missiles, one of which it says shot down the helicopter.

Academic experts at the forum discounted Mr. Ter-Petrosyan's suggestion that the Commonwealth, which has no supra-national structure, might send a peacekeeping force.

"I would say that is a non-starter," said one. "None of the other republics want to get involved in that hornet's nest."

Mr. Ter-Petrosyan said he wanted a preliminary political settlement which would ensure human and economic rights for Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh and autonomy for the area. "If these demands were met, I would consider that the issue at this stage had been solved," he added. "That would provide the ground for further negotiations on a full solution."

He did not say what this would involve. Many Armenian political groups insist that the enclave must become part of Armenia.



Church draws protest for 'marrying' two gay men

PASADENA, Calif (AP) — A group of Christian fundamentalists marched outside a southern California Church Sunday to protest a wedding ceremony last month for two gay men. About 48 kilometres away in San Pedro, a minister who urged homosexuals to repent during a memorial service for an AIDS victim was fired. In Pasadena, a half-dozen protesters held signs that said "homosex is a sin," and handed out tracts titled, "what's worse than dying with AIDS?" to parishioners at the All Saints Episcopal Church. "It's absolutely the wrong signal with the AIDS epidemic raging out of control," the Rev. R. L. Hyman, pastor of the Baptist Tabernacle of Los Angeles, said of the gay "marriage." "The last thing a pastor should do is advocate a life-threatening and soul-threatening practice of sodomy," said Rev. Hyman, who organised the demonstration. But the Rev. George Regas defended his decision to marry Mark Benson and Philip Straw in a Jan. 18 ceremony attended by 500 guests. He said he made the decision after talking to many of the church's 3,000 parishioners. "We have done what we think God is calling us to do," Rev. Regas said before services Sunday. "We believe the inclusive love of Christ welcomes everybody." The wedding remains figurative because state law does not recognise same-sex marriages.

19-year-old wins Albania's first beauty contest

TIRANA (R) — A 19-year-old high school graduate put Albania's downtrodden women briefly in the spotlight Friday night when she won the first-ever beauty contest to be held in Albania's poorest country. But Valbona Semillari Tirana also became a symbol of the situation in the shortage-stricken, former Stalinist state. She, like most of her 25 co-contestants, is unemployed with little prospect of finding a job. "A beauty contest in times like this could seem strange," the master of ceremonies told the audience of mostly 3,000 men gathered in the ornate Congress Palace in central Tirana. "But we would like to show the world that Albania has beautiful girls despite its poverty." Earlier, 15-year-old Peqi Vreto from Tirana was chosen to be Albania's first Miss Smile. Friday's performance in which the contestants wore colourful dresses and bathing costumes, was a glimpse of glamour in a country of bare shops, in which hospitals lack essential equipment and industry is at a virtual standstill because of outdated equipment and lack of raw materials.

Art exhibit memorializes people with AIDS

NEW YORK (AP) — Delores, a homeless person with AIDS, fought tenaciously to cling to life despite the double handicap she faced. She lost, dying a painful death at age 32. Now a New York social worker-turned-artist has given Delores and about three dozen people like her the respect and dignity in death that they largely failed to achieve in life. David F. Johnson, 49, worked for five years at the Bailey House — a refuge in Greenwich Village for homeless people with AIDS. He began painting portraits of those people as his personal catharsis for coping with tragedy. The portraits have become a much-travelled exhibit. The irony of his exhibit's popularity is not lost on Johnson, who began painting in 1985 as an outlet for suppressed emotions. "Society is generally indifferent to this kind of people — gays and drug addicts and street people," Johnson said in a recent interview. "But these people are not drug addicts on rooftops. They're people with families and connections who wanted to be remembered." The exhibit, on display through Feb. 7 in Manhattan, has made 14 stops since 1990. Accompanying the gouache (opaque watercolour) paintings are short, poignant captions that recall a favourite hobby, a challenge met, a distinctive trait. The faces variously depict disappointment, defiance, rage, pain — often distortion and discolouration — as well as dignity and grace. Johnson hopes the paintings confirm what French author Albert Camus wrote in his novel *The Plague* nearly half a century ago: "To state quite simply what we learn in times of pestilence: That there are more things to admire in men than to despise."

WORLD NEWS IN BRIEF

Deng appears on television

PEKING (R) — China's paramount leader Deng Xiaoping, 87, appeared on state television Monday for the first time in a year. A smiling and apparently healthy Deng was shown shaking hands at a Lunar New Year reception in Shanghai for soldiers and civilians. He was dressed in a high-collared grey Mao suit and was walking slowly with a woman holding his arm. Mr. Deng has been on a two-week tour of economically booming southern regions. He last appeared on state television this time last year during a similar reception. The China Daily newspaper Monday published the first picture of Mr. Deng on his tour, showing him with President Yang Shangkun visiting the botanical gardens in the Shenzhen Special Economic Zone bordering Hong Kong.

Thousands protest after Ershad sentenced

DHAKA (R) — Nearly 5,000 supporters of ousted Bangladesh President Hossain Mohammad Ershad, already serving a 10-year jail term, staged a protest after a court sentenced him Monday to three more years. "We shall bring you out. You are not alone yet," chanted demonstrators who poured out the streets after an annual conference of Gen. Ershad's Jatiya Party. Police said the protest was peaceful. Gen. Ershad was jailed Monday for possessing Bangladeshi currency worth \$600,000 which the court ruled he acquired corruptly. Judge Mohammad Ali Khan ordered that the money and a four-wheel drive vehicle found at Gen. Ershad's former residence in Dhaka's military barracks be forfeited to the government, the Bangladesh News Agency reported.

'Too soon for massive aid to Russia'

WASHINGTON (R) — The U.S. ambassador to Russia described Moscow's economic reform programme as more courageous than coherent and said it was too soon for the United States to pump billions of dollars into the country. "It wouldn't be prudent to spend money today," Ambassador Robert Strauss told the U.S. National Governors' Association. He said that Russia still lacks the financial institutions and economic structures to make sure the money is not wasted. The United States and its allies are already providing Russia with food and humanitarian assistance, but Moscow has appealed for \$7 billion more to help stabilise its shaky economy and carry out painful economic reforms. As the first major step in those reforms, Russian President Boris Yeltsin last month freed prices on most goods from government control, allowing them to shoot higher. "His economic plan... is a lot more courageous than it is coherent," said Mr. Strauss. "It is not a very coherent programme."

White House rejects Yeltsin plan

WASHINGTON (R) — U.S. Defence Secretary Dick Cheney has rejected Russian President Boris Yeltsin's call for massive cuts in long-range nuclear weapons beyond those already proposed by President George Bush. "There's a level... we want to hold at," Mr. Cheney said on a Cable News Network's weekly news programme. Mr. Bush called for a 50 per cent cut in strategic nuclear arms last month beyond that already agreed to in July's Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) between the United States and the former Soviet Union. That would bring the number of warheads on each side down to about 4,500. But Mr. Yeltsin has since come out in favour of a much deeper reduction, to 2,500 warheads. U.S. Secretary of State James Baker will visit Moscow later this month to start in-depth negotiations with Mr. Yeltsin's government on strategic nuclear arms cuts. "There's no question we will go beyond START in terms of reducing the amount of strategic systems on both sides," Mr. Cheney said. "I prefer our proposal."

De Klerk fires coloured cabinet

CAPE TOWN (R) — South African President F.W. de Klerk Monday fired the cabinet in charge of mixed-race coloured affairs and appointed members of his own National Party in their place. Mr. De Klerk's move followed a 44-40 vote of no confidence Friday in the Labour Party, which controlled the six-member cabinet and is led by veteran anti-apartheid campaigner Allan Hendrickse. South Africa has separate chambers of parliament for whites, coloureds and ethnic Indians, but none for the black majority. Hendrickse, who had dominated the segregated Coloured House of Representatives since its creation in 1984, was ousted by a coalition including 36 supporters of Mr. De Klerk's recently integrated National Party, but said he would not resign. Mr. De Klerk, who is travelling in Europe, responded Monday with a message distributed by his Cape Town office. He appointed Labour Party renegade Jac Rabie as head of the cabinet responsible for the distribution of government funds voted for the three million coloured minority.

China's party chief invited to Japan

HONG KONG (R) — China's Communist Party General Secretary Jiang Zemin has been invited to Japan, the most senior Chinese visitor since the 1989 crackdown on pro-democracy protests, a Peking funded newspaper said Monday. Japanese Prime Minister Kiichi Miyazawa invited Mr. Jiang to attend a ceremony marking 20 years of Sino-Japanese ties during a meeting with Chinese Premier Li Peng at the United Nations. Wen Wei Po said, Numerous lower-ranking Chinese officials have visited Japan since 1989, including Vice Premier Zou Jiahua and Foreign Minister Qian Qichen. Mr. Li told Mr. Miyazawa that Mr. Jiang's visit would be an important step in developing relations between the two countries, the Hong Kong-based newspaper said. Analysts said Mr. Jiang was a more acceptable guest than Mr. Li, who is seen as a chief architect of China's 1989 crackdown.

Italy to hold general elections on April 5-6

ROME (R) — President Francesco Cossiga Sunday called early general elections for April 5 and 6, saying that the present parliament had exhausted itself and the "magic moment" had come for Italy to reform itself.

In a blistering attack on the current political system, Mr. Cossiga said Italy needed "a government that could govern, a parliament that could legislate, an administrative machinery that can actually administer and judges who can judge."

The long-awaited decision opens a period of deep political uncertainty because of the ill-defined powers of the outgoing government and the head of state himself in the long political transition period that has begun.

The Christian Democrat-led four-party coalition remains in office until April 7 — the day after the elections — when Prime Minister Giulio Andreotti has to resign, but Cossiga Sunday said the government would have only limited powers.

Racing against the clock, the Italian parliament last week rushed to approve a torrent of legislation.

The president told a news conference that since parliament — which normally controls the executive — was dissolved, he would himself decide case by case what the outgoing government could and could not do.

The transition is complicated by the fact that Mr. Cossiga's own mandate expires on July 3. It will be up to newly-elected parliament, which will meet on April 23, to choose his successor, a notoriously tortuous process in Italy.

Burma setting up firing squads, refugees say

DHAKA (R) — Burma is setting up firing squads to curb Muslim and other rebels in its Western Muslim-majority Arakan state, refugees fleeing into Bangladesh said Monday.

They said Major-General Myo Nunt, a senior army commander in Arakan state, ordered troops in Buthidaung area Saturday to set up firing squads.

Refugees told Bangladesh officials in Cox's Bazar that Burma's military was angry because rebels such as the Rohingya (Muslim) Solidarity Organisation had not surrendered their weapons by the army's end of January deadline.

The refugees' report could not be independently verified. "We have no independent information about the reported firing squads," a Bangladesh military source told reporters Monday.

Bangladesh says more than 70,000 Burmese refugees have fled to the Cox's Bazar area to escape alleged persecution by the army despite heightened border security.

Officials said at least 2,500 Rohingya refugees crossed into Bangladesh in the past two days.

The majority of them (refugees) have taken shelter in deep forests or with relatives who came in earlier," one official in Cox's Bazar said by telephone.

"Those who reported to government-run refugee camps are facing shortage of food ... we really don't know what to do with them."

A leader of the Rohingya Welfare Association told reporters in Cox's Bazar hundreds of students, led by the All Burma Students Front, demonstrated in

Akyah (formerly Sitwe) Saturday and Sunday against "military atrocities."

"At least 50 people were injured as troops opened fire on the agitating marchers on the streets of Akyah," Nazrul Islam told the Daily Star newspaper.

Burma has been reported to have deployed 75,000 regular and paramilitary troops along its 270 kilometre frontier with Bangladesh. Dhaka has responded by drafting in troops and alerting its navy and air force.

The military build-up followed an attack on Dec. 21 by Burmese troops on a camp of paramilitary Bangladesh Rifles, killing one soldier and wounding three.

Rangoon at first said the attack was in error as its troops pursued Rohingya rebels. Later it denied any involvement.

Rangoon, in recent meetings on restoring border peace and repatriating refugees, accused Dhaka of harbouring Muslim rebels fighting for independence from Burma. Bangladesh denied the charge.

Meanwhile, thousands of Krenn villagers have fled to Thailand to escape Burmese artillery barrages and army squads press-gang porters.

As the crump of shells bailed the dry season offensive, Karens gathered livestock, pots and pans, and blackboards for their schoolchildren and streamed east.

The military has unleashed its offensive against Karen guerrillas in the mountains of eastern Burma with extra ferocity this year in a bid to crush the long-running insurgency.

peace." The unresolved issue of Kashmir "poses a danger of a war," he said.

He said at least 6,500 people had been killed in the border state in the past two years. India has reported about 3,600 deaths in that period.

Muslims in Kashmir are campaigning for a secession of the state from the Indian Federation. "We are inclined to wonder at the possible motivation of the Pakistani high commissioner for choosing this particular point of time," Mr. Seth said.

The interview appeared on the day the prime ministers of India and Pakistan, P.V. Narasimha Rao and Nawaz Sharif, met privately at a world economic conference in Switzerland and

emerged speaking about a reduction of tension between their countries.

"What is the government of India doing in Kashmir today. It is a free fire zone... this is not a civilised way of dealing with a problem nor is it likely to be effective," Mr. Sattar said.

Secessionist violence flared in January 1990 following a government crackdown on escalating protests, bombing and attacks on state officials by Muslim separatists.

The Kashmir issue has been alternately simmering and flaring for more than four decades following the 1947 partition of the old British colonial India into predominantly Muslim Pakistan and the mostly Hindu India.

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